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# AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

## STUDENT REPORT

RIVER RATS: A HISTORY OF  
THE RED RIVER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

MAJOR DAVID B. HARWOOD

85-1075

*"insights into tomorrow"*

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**REPORT NUMBER** 85-1075

**TITLE** RIVER RATS: A HISTORY OF  
THE RED RIVER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

**AUTHOR(S)** MAJOR DAVID B. HARWOOD, USAF

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Submitted to the faculty in partial fulfillment of  
requirements for graduation.

**AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE**  
**AIR UNIVERSITY**  
**MAXWELL AFB, AL 36112**

## REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION <b>UNCLASSIFIED</b>		1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS	
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY		3. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT	
2b. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE			
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S) <b>85-1075</b>		5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)	
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION <b>ACSC/EDCC</b>	6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION	
6c. ADDRESS (City, State and ZIP Code) <b>Maxwell AFB AL 36112</b>		7b. ADDRESS (City, State and ZIP Code)	
8a. NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION	8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	
8c. ADDRESS (City, State and ZIP Code)		10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NOS.	
		PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.
		TASK NO.	WORK UNIT NO.
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) <b>RIVER RATS: A HISTORY OF THE RED</b>			
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) <b>Harwood, David B., Major, USAF</b>			
13a. TYPE OF REPORT	13b. TIME COVERED FROM _____ TO _____	14. DATE OF REPORT (Yr., Mo., Day) <b>1985 April</b>	15. PAGE COUNT <b>77</b>
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION <b>ITEM 11: RIVER VALLEY ASSOCIATION (U)</b>			
17. COSATI CODES		18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)	
FIELD	GROUP SUB. GR.		
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) <p>The Red River Valley Association (RRVA) originated in Thailand in 1967 when aircrews gathered to devise better tactics for use on airstrikes into North Vietnam. The organization was later chartered in the United States to commemorate the camaraderie that developed among aircrews who flew in combat over North Vietnam. The organization later expanded its objectives to include active participation in POW/MIA affairs, support of POW/MIA families, and discussion and debate of aerospace issues. The report traces the development and activities of the RRVA, and its relevance in today's and tomorrow's Air Force.</p>			
20. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <b>UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED</b> <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS <input type="checkbox"/>		21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION <b>UNCLASSIFIED</b>	
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL <b>ACSC/EDCC Maxwell AFB AL 36112</b>		22b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include Area Code) <b>(205) 293-2483</b>	22c. OFFICE SYMBOL

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## PREFACE

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This is the first effort at recording the history of the Red River Valley Association (RRVA). Since its inception in 1967, members have suggested that organization events be recorded. At times, there has been a historian for the organization but, to date, only certain items have been recorded. This paper consolidates many earlier writings and couples the organization's development with the author's perspective.

The ultimate objective of this effort is to produce a book about the Red River Valley Association. Therefore, this paper is really the beginning of a more involved process. The author will present the paper to the RRVA Board of Directors during the 1985 annual reunion in April. The author will solicit additional information from the membership and, with assistance from the US Air Force Office of History, will expand this initial writing in preparation for publication.

The author is grateful for the assistance given by numerous individuals. Thanks go to Mrs Patti Sheridan, RRVA Executive Secretary; ACSC Advisor Colonel Bob Bradshaw; and USAF Office of History sponsor, Dr. Wayne Thompson. Also, Brigadier General Philip Drew, Colonel Bradshaw, and Mrs. Sheridan who provided extensive background information. Particular thanks go to Colonel Howard C. Johnson, who conceived the idea of the organization in 1967 and has given fully of his time and knowledge to guide the author.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Major David B. Harwood is an active member of the Red River Valley Association who is compiling that organization's history for subsequent publication. He is a highly experienced Weapon Systems Officer with over 1500 hours in the F-4. His assignment history includes duties in PACAF, TAC, and USAFE. Duty organizations include the 388th TFW at Korat, Thailand; 33 TFW, Eglin AFB, Florida; 81 TFW, RAF Bentwaters, United Kingdom; 86 TFW, Ramstein, Germany; and the 35 TFW, George AFB, California. At George AFB, Major Harwood was Assistant Operations Officer of the 20th Tactical Fighter Training Squadron, which provides all German Luftwaffe F-4 aircrew training in the US. While in Germany, Major Harwood served for two years as Command Briefing Officer at HQ USAFE.

Major Harwood holds a bachelor of arts degree in political science from the University of Connecticut and a master of science degree in public administration from Troy State University. He also served on the graduate faculty of Golden Gate University while stationed at George AFB from 1982-84. Major Harwood has completed Squadron Officer School by correspondence and in residence, and completed the Air Command and Staff College correspondence program before being selected to attend in residence. He is currently completing the National Security Management Program of the National Defense University by correspondence.

Major Harwood's decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal with one oak leaf cluster, the Air Force Commendation Medal, and the Combat Readiness Medal with one oak leaf cluster. He was the USAFE 1980 Junior Officer representative to the Air Force association (AFA) National Convention and a member of the AFA Junior Officer Advisory Council. In 1973, he was an Outstanding Graduate of Air Force Undergraduate Navigator Training.

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**REPORT NUMBER** 85-1075

**AUTHOR(S)** MAJOR DAVID B. HARWOOD, USAF

**TITLE** RIVER RATS: A HISTORY OF THE RED RIVER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

The Red River Valley Association (RRVA) originated in Thailand in 1967 when aircrews gathered to devise better tactics for use during airstrikes into North Vietnam. The organization was later chartered in the United States to commemorate the camaraderie developed among aircrews who flew in combat over North Vietnam. The organization has expanded its objectives over the years to include active participation in POW/MIA affairs, support of POW/MIA families, and discussion and debate of aerospace issues.

This report traces the development of the Red River Valley Organization from its origin in 1967 to the present. Discussion includes organization meetings and activities as well as development and changes to its charter, membership policy, and objectives. Further, the author addresses the relevance of the RRVA in today's and tomorrow's Air Force. The author concludes that the current organization objectives are worthwhile and that the RRVA offers valuable insight into lessons learned from air combat in Southeast Asia. Through RRVA activities, these lessons may be taught to today's aircrews that they might be better prepared to support US national defense.

## INTRODUCTION

There were few surprises--they knew we were coming and we knew they were waiting. Tense briefings, checking the weather, the route. A last nervous cup of coffee before suiting up. Pre-flighting with a flashlight in the pre-dawn darkness. "Bear flight, check!" Then you're busy with the mechanics of taxiing, arming, and getting the big beast airborne. Too busy to think--or to worry. The tanker join-up goes well. The bird checks out. Looks like a go. You've got your fuel and the force is dropping off after refueling--precisely on schedule. Good work by the tanker crews. Makes you feel better. You know they'll be here when you come out. Now the force is joined up and the radio is silent. This is the worst time. You'll think a lifetime in these next few minutes. You're headed north! The full impact finally hits you. It isn't someone else going to Hanoi--it's you. A trickle of cold sweat down the spine. A few more minutes before things start to happen. Everyone doesn't make it every time. Seems an eternity. God I'm afraid. The tension mounts. Wish the next twenty minutes were over. "Bear four move it out." "Barracuda green 'em up." "Olds flight go to CAP primary." Things are starting to happen. That's funny--I'm not afraid anymore. Suddenly on Guard, "This is Bone-crusher, blue bandits, airborne, Hanoi." The tension colors to excitement. Calmly: "Barracuda has a two-ringer at one o'clock." "Bear flight, 85s at 12 o'clock." Everybody's talking now. Guard channel is alive with crisp warning. Automatically you hear what's important and disregard what's not. The flak suppression flight goes to work in the target area with terse commands. Approaching the target now. The sky fills with black puffs. "Lead's in." This is it! There's the target! Pull hard on the stick. Get the beast going down, fast. Black and white puffs all around you. Pipper's right. There's no way. Release altitude coming up. Pickle! Pull! Jink! "Three, you're hit!" "Roger." "Four, break left!" MIGs! Pull hard! Dive away! Accelerate! Time to get out! Join up with somebody--anybody. Crossing the Red. Check six. Clear. You're on the way out. Soaking wet. Mouth like cotton. Three's down, rescue already in progress. There's the tanker. You're in fairly safe territory now. Hard to talk yourself into pulling the throttle back, isn't it?

It's all over. You made it! You've qualified for the most elite and unique club in the world. (59:18-19)

In February, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson announced that in order to destroy the North's potential to wage war in South Vietnam, strategic targets in North Vietnam were liable to US bombing. The focal point of this effort would be the Red River Valley, an industrial complex of some 180 square miles. Though relatively small, this area included the North Vietnamese capital, Hanoi, and the major port city of Haiphong. It housed some 85 percent of North Vietnam's industrial capacity. It quickly became the most heavily and effectively defended target in the history of aerial warfare. (59:18)

Many missions were flown over the Red River Valley. The men who flew them came to be known as River Rats, and were eligible to become members of the Red River Valley Association. Credit for founding the RRVA goes to Colonel Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson (USAF-Ret.) who was Deputy Commander for Operations of the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing at Korat RTAFB in 1966-67. (59:19)

The North Vietnamese based their defense on a radar net that stretched the entire width of the country. Information provided by the radars gave early warning of attack to anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) and surface-to-air missiles (SAMs). The radars could also be used to direct intercepts by SAMs or MIG aircraft. The concentration of defenses was such that it was nearly impossible to attack targets without being engaged by SAMs and AAA. If one successfully avoided ground defenses, he then might be further challenged by attacking MIGs.

Colonel Johnson wanted combat pilots to get together and discuss problems of the valley and devise tactics to meet the challenges they faced in the North. (62:1) The first meeting of the group, originally known as the Red River Valley Fighter Pilots' Association (RRVFPA), was held at Korat in May, 1967. Five more gatherings, or reunions, were held in Thailand during 1967 and 1968.

In 1969, River Rat operations moved to the United States and the organization formed its first official charter. Reunions continued annually and activities expanded as River Rats assisted the families of Southeast Asia POW/MIAs, worked to promote awareness in the American public about the plight of the POWs, and sought to speed the return of POWs to the US. The main event occurred in 1973 when Hanoi released 590 of the POWs. (52:606-18) The River Rat gathering in Las Vegas that year was known as the first "Real Reunion" while all previous gatherings would henceforth be known as "practice reunions".

Annual reunions are still the focus of RRVA activities which have expanded since the early meetings in Thailand. At Fort Worth,

Texas, in 1984, more than \$28,000.00 was donated to the scholarship fund which continues to assist MIA children who seek college educations. The River Rats have sustained their effort to support the Department of Defense to obtain a full and just accounting of those whose fate in Southeast Asia remains a mystery. There are other changes as well. Today, there are fewer active duty members who experienced combat in Southeast Asia. The River Rat charter was changed to offer associate membership to individuals who pledge to support RRVA objectives and have been recommended by a charter member.

In the following pages, I'll trace the development of the Red River Valley Association from its origin at Korat to its current activities. I'll highlight the changes that have occurred and suggest a future course of action for the RRVA.

## Chapter One

### ACTIVITIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, 1967-68

The first of five "practice" reunions was held at Korat RTAFB, home base of Scrappy Johnson, who originated the idea. His intent was to have a tactics symposium and a good party. River Rats and reunions were at that time a thing of the future. Early in 1967, Colonel Robin Olds had hosted a tactics conference at Ubon, where he was Commander of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing. A team from 7th Air Force attended, and the discussions were useful. Most of the results, however, disappeared in the headquarters bureaucracy and were of little value to the line fighter pilot. Colonel Johnson envisioned a more productive conference at which fighter, bomber, escort, and tanker folks could talk it over face-to-face, then implement their solutions. (62:1)

Initially, Colonel Johnson presented his ideas to Colonel William S. "Bill" Chairsell, 388th Tactical Fighter Wing Commander, and proposed a Dining In. Colonel Chairsell advised that they couldn't have a Dining In with such limited attendance--it would have to be open to all wing personnel. However, they could have a dinner if they called it something else. Thus, the Red River Valley Fighter Pilots' Association was conceived. That title is attributed to A. J. "Lash" Lagreau, project officer for the Korat meeting, or "Fat" Frank Smith, one of his assistants. (The emblem and "River Rats" nickname would surface at the next meeting.) At any rate, a 40-foot banner welcomed those attending with the saying, "Welcome Red River Valley Fighter Pilots' Association." Difficulties evolved trying to get all the aircrews in one place at one time. After all, there was a war going on. For every problem, though, exists a solution. The Korat show went on. (61:1)

Because fighter pilots are naturally inclined to do things in a big way, parades, marching bands, and lovely Thai hostesses were to be part of the occasion. Elephants carried the distinguished visitors and led the parade. The elephants actually were the highlight. Scrappy had initially tasked "Lash" to find three elephants, but somehow he came up with six. Getting the elephants to Korat was no small undertaking. It was a three-day journey each way for the elephants, which were rented for the sum of twenty dollars each. Also on hand was the 13th Air Force Band and a band from a school in, or near, Korat. Together, they provided both American and Thai music. Of course, lovely Thai maidens were in plentiful supply locally. Among the

honored guests were Colonels Robin Olds and Daniel "Chappie" James, Commander and Vice Commander of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing at Ubon. Colonel Olds was well-known at this time for having conceived and led the Bolo MIG Sweep on 2 January 1967. That mission was credited with seven enemy kills with no friendly losses. Colonel Olds himself had scored two MIG kills. Altogether, the parade was an impressive sight, and set the stage for the remainder of the gathering. (62:2)

A major highlight for this and successive reunions was the tactical conference. Discussion ranged from target attack tactics to ways to improve procedures, as well as better coordination and cooperation between units while flying over the Red River Valley. One positive result of the tactics conference was the "Snoopy Report" which addressed the task of getting large "Alpha" task forces in and out of North Vietnam. Each of the wings participating in a strike would normally receive fragmentary orders which outlined its tasks for a specific mission. However, there was little or no crossflow of data between the wings. Consequently, coordination between participating units was often poor. The "Snoopy Report" alleviated the problem by providing lateral communication. In fact, it was a nickname for messages sent by one wing to other participants, providing information about target and refueling assignments, rendezvous points, etc. At Korat, the conference participants had a vested interest in its success and took the initiative to develop procedures which would make their combat missions more safe and effective. (63:1)

Another historic highlight was that everyone had a great time. Colonel Daniel "Chappie" James was guest speaker at the evening dinner. Later that evening, the program included a number of games started by Maurice "Mo" Seaver. Scrappy learned then why Robin had brought with him six of the biggest guys at Ubon, a group headed by Captain Darrell "Dee" Simmonds. Around midnight, Robin whispered to Scrappy, "I know a good game, but it usually starts a fight." Shortly thereafter, the group was introduced to the first River Rat MIG Sweep. (The airborne version of that tactic is to clear some airspace of enemy fighters. In the bar, one group links arms and "sweeps" the area, clearing out anyone and anything in the way.) (61:2)

The second practice reunion was held at Ubon in August, 1967. It was at this reunion that the River Rat nickname and emblem were chosen. All participating units submitted suggestions for naming the new organization; it was the 469th TFS which provided the winning entry. (62:3) (See Note on Next Page) Again, parades and hostesses were among the program highlights. Ubon, however, didn't have access to any of the late model elephants used at Korat, so the honored guests were obliged to ride a little closer to the ground on some pre-war vintage water buffalo. At least the tradition of VIP transportation had been maintained. Honored guests included Colonel William Schick from the 432d Tactical Reconnaissance Wing at Udorn and Colonel John Giraudo,

Commander of the 355th Tactical Fighter Wing at Takhli. Parade marshall was Captain Darrell Simmonds (noted previously) who had shot down two MIG 17s within two minutes while expending less than 500 rounds from his 20MM gun. Colonel "Chappie" James was master of ceremonies for this affair. (59:20)

Takhli RTAFB, home of the 355th TFW, was the site for practice reunion number three which began 30 November 1967. The parade was followed by a flyby and the customary evening cocktail hour. Each delegate was presented a "Rat Hat" and a River Rat song book. New Navy River Rats from the USS Intrepid and the USS Coral Sea were "initiated" by the group. (59:21)

Known as the first "floating reunion", the group moved on the second day to the Siam Intercontinental Hotel in Bangkok. Travel arrangements were courtesy of an available in-theater C-47. Undoubtedly, in an effort to refine tactics discussed the previous day, the air route included a target pass at Korat RTAFB, where numerous hits were recorded on the toilet paper bombing run.

On 7 March 1968, a fourth practice reunion convened at Udorn RTAFB, home of the 432d TRW. Activities at Udorn were similar to the three previous gatherings. On the second day, however, the entire reunion was airlifted south to Pattaya Beach on the Gulf of Thailand (Siam). At Pattaya, the weather was great, the water refreshing, and there were numerous imported female friendlies (round-eye variety). That evening, the crowd gathered at the Nipa Lodge for what is rumored to have been the best prepared Luau in the history of civilization. Despite the festive mood and good times, however, there was work to be done in the Red River Valley, and the group dispersed the next day to their individual units. (59:21)

The fifth and final Thailand practice reunion was held at Korat in June, 1968, thirteen months after the first meeting. At this meeting the group decided the next get-together would occur in the United States. (59:21-22) Most of the original River Rats had returned to the US, and bombing of North Vietnam had stopped in March. (51:281) A major feature of this final Thailand reunion was the concept of the POW/MIA Freedom Bell.

The Freedom Bell was later cast in Thailand and donated to the River Rats by the 388th TFW. It was dedicated to those men who were POWs or listed as MIA. The clapper of the bell was

NOTE: The River Rat emblem is a shield which has a black background and a yellow border, upon which is a geographical representation of the Red River and Thud Ridge. The Red River is shown as a red line running from top left to bottom right, while Thud Ridge is above it in white. A yellow star along the river symbolizes the North Vietnam capital, Hanoi, and the words RIVER RATS bracket the display at top and bottom. (58:1)

immobilized so that it would remain silent until the POWs were released. (4:10) The following message accompanied the Freedom Bell:

THIS LIBERTY BELL, ITS CLAPPER IMMOBILIZED, IS NOT TO BE RUNG UNTIL THE RELEASE OF OUR AMERICAN COMRADES BEING HELD PRISONER IN NORTH VIETNAM. WHEN THESE BRAVE MEN ARE FINALLY REPATRIATED, THE BELL WILL BE RUNG AT A RIVER RAT REUNION HELD ESPECIALLY IN THEIR HONOR. THIS BELL HAS BECOME A SYMBOL FOR FREEDOM AND COURAGE---A MONUMENT THAT EVOKES THE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DEDICATION AND SACRIFICES OF THOSE AIRMEN WHO CARRIED THE VIETNAMESE CONFLICT DEEP INTO HOSTILE TERRITORY.

The River Rats organization was growing. It had provided a forum for discussion of ways to better employ airpower in North Vietnam and allow aircrews to recount the special experiences they shared. The River Rat mission was still growing, though. Next would come a greater commitment of support for those who had lost their freedom or their lives, and to their families who waited--not knowing when, or if, their husbands and fathers would return.



## Chapter Two

### RIVER RATS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1969-72

The move of the River Rat organization to the United States led to development of a formal charter, increased membership, and a variety of new activities. In some respects, it represented an overall shift of purpose. A key tenet was to preserve the camaraderie of the Southeast Asia experience. But now, instead of focusing on how aircraft would be employed in combat, River Rats turned their attention to those who were the victims of combat; in particular, the POWs, MIAs, and their families. Not much was known by the American public about the missing and captive men and their problems. The River Rats would soon mobilize and change that, too.

Events in 1969 centered around establishing a membership base for the River Rats, approving a charter and planning and organizing the first stateside reunion. At one time, the group intended the first CONUS reunion to be the first REAL Reunion, but this was subsequently reserved for the first reunion to be held following the release of our prisoners. In Newsletter #1, dated 12 February 1969, Colonel Lawrence J. "Larry" Pickett wrote that there had been considerable enthusiasm and interest in formally establishing the Red River Valley Fighter Pilots' Association (RRVFPA). At the time of his writing, more than 400 had responded to notices in the Air Force Times and base newspapers. Scrappy Johnson had drafted a proposed charter and Brigadier Generals Chairsell, Olds, and Giraudo, as well as Colonel Bill Scott had provided editorial assistance. Wichita, Kansas (McConnell AFB) was chosen to be the first stateside reunion site with scheduled dates of 25-27 April 1969. (69:1)

The first stateside reunion was a resounding success and established patterns that have become characteristic of all River Rat reunions. There were plenty of war stories told although no elephants or water buffalo were available for distinguished visitor transportation. Some 700 Rats participated in the Wichita reunion, far exceeding initial estimates that approximately 250 would attend. Reunion attendees flew in from all over the United States, creating a challenge for base operations personnel at McConnell. They planned ahead, however, and did a superb job parking and handling 135 aircraft. The base also provided transportation to and from town and numerous other hosting details. (1:1)

Friday night's beer call was the scene for River Rats in their Sierra Hotel (S.H.) party suits, a tradition which carries on to the present. (See Note Below) Saturday, General Chairsell conducted the business meeting at which the first River Rat charter was ratified, legitimizing the organization. At the time, the primary objective was to preserve the camaraderie that developed among aircrews who fought in the air war over the Red River Valley of North Vietnam. (See Appendix A, Proposed River Rat Charter) The first Board of Officers was elected, too, with Scrappy Johnson chosen to be President, or CINCRAT. Saturday evening highlights included remarks by Generals Giraudo, Chairsell, and Olds, as well as Colonels Schick and Scott. A few minor injuries resulted from some MIG Sweeps; but the reunion, in general, was well-controlled and highly successful. (1:1-4)

Much credit for the success of the reunion was given to McConnell AFB's 23d Tactical Fighter Wing Commander, Colonel Jim Hartinger and his Vice Commander, Colonel Bob Eklund. They published a plan which accommodated the myriad details incident to hosting the crowd. The Wichita Chamber of Commerce furnished people who helped with registration and the hotel staffs were highly cooperative. They praised the River Rats and noted that never before in their recollection had 100 percent of personal bills been paid by the end of a convention/reunion. The hotel beverage manager also noted that he had never before witnessed higher per capita booze consumption. Not one incident occurred which would have attracted the attention of local police with whom the event had been pre-coordinated. Not a bad start! (1:1)

The organization was on the move, but there would be much to do in the months ahead. The new charter had to be prepared for legal registration. The Freedom Bell was ready at Korat and the question arose regarding a permanent location for it, along with other River Rat trophies and plaques. The next business meeting would have a full agenda.

On 28 June 1969, RRVFPA officers met in the Officers' Club at Cannon AFB, New Mexico. Some of the issues discussed included membership, a permanent River Rat location, the next reunion, organization objectives, and local base activities. The group

NOTE: Party suits, also known as S.H. party suits or custom Rat party suits, originated in Thailand, most probably at Takhli. Produced inexpensively by Thai tailors, the suits reflected one's unit color and were extensively decorated with patches and embroidery. The early versions were of cotton or a cotton blend material, which gave way in the early 1970s to a newer polyester doubleknit fabric. The party suit was common attire for monthly hail and farewell, or SAWADEE, parties in Southeast Asia, and today is standard dress for Friday informal gatherings at River Rat reunions.

decided that tenure of officers would be for one year with elections held at the annual reunion.

Categories of membership were discussed. All aircrew members shot down over North Vietnam who subsequently became POWs were automatically Life Members. Individuals listed as MIA or KIA would be carried on a temporary Honor Roll along with the current POWs. When the POWs were released and MIA status confirmed, the Honor Roll would be formalized. The officers also decided to maintain "pure" membership--not allowing any Honorary River Rats. Thus, the requirement for membership was that an individual must have flown at least one combat mission in Route Package Six. (7:9) (See Note Below)

No permanent location was chosen for the River Rats. As an interim measure, the officers decided that the secretary and treasurer should come from Nellis AFB and NAS Miramar, respectively. That would provide address continuity for those offices until a permanent location was selected. Also, in the interim, the RRVFPA president was to be responsible for safe-keeping of any plaques, trophies, or heraldic items. (64:3)

The secretary assumed responsibility for local chapter activities. At each base with River Rat representation, a volunteer base CINCRAT would take responsibility for local membership drives, publicity for reunions, assistance to national officers, and other activities as necessary. Local organizations assumed the lead in publicizing the plight of American POWs/MIAs and became active in mobilizing public opinion oriented toward securing the release of our prisoners and a full accounting of those missing in action. (65:7)

Subsequent board meetings in 1969 and 1970 addressed issues of honorary memberships, the official organization title, and the scholarship fund. A new board of officers, elected in 1970, saw Brigadier General Robin Olds take office as CINCRAT.

Qualification for membership was changed to allow senior officers "who were in direct command of River Rats and who actually ordered combat missions flown" to be eligible to join as Honorary Rats. Because the term "fighter pilot" was not technically appropriate for all River Rats eligibles, much discussion centered around a proposal to rename the organization the Red River Valley Association. The first motion for such a change was soundly defeated but the topic continued to generate

NOTE: North Vietnam (NVN) was geographically divided into six areas called route packages (RPGs). RPGs one through four were in sequence, from south to north, beginning at the southernmost point in NVN. RPG five was the upper northwest portion of NVN while RPG six was the upper northeast section which included the cities of Hanoi and Haiphong. (50:18)

discussion. The River Rat scholarship program was activated in 1970. Of twenty-nine applicants, three were each awarded \$1000 scholarships. It was the beginning of a program that would grow and provide continued assistance to many MIA/KIA children, and will be discussed in more detail later.

Despite all the hard work, River Rats still found time to have fun. Annual reunions continued. It was San Antonio in 1970, San Diego in 1971, and a return to Wichita in 1972.

Tacos, booze, and George Jessel! Who could ask for more? San Antonio hosted the reunion as only it could, with the 140-foot convention bar stacked eight bottles deep and covered with hot sauce. Excellent support and displays were provided by corporations which included Raytheon, Grumman, International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT), L. T. Vought, Fairchild-Hiller, and others. (5:4) George Jessel ensured that no one left without a thousand Sierra Hotels and loads of laughter. Walks down the San Antonio River, including a couple of dips here and there, did not deter the Chief of Police from labeling the River Rats "one of the most colorful bunch of imbibers I've ever had the pleasure to deal with." In addition to the new scholarship fund, this reunion saw the beginnings of what is now the Country Store. (42:8)

At first, the River Rats had a purchasing and distributing agent who sold patches, pins, stationery, and reunion books for the organization. In subsequent years, this function has been known as both the City Store and the Country Store depending on the residence of its operator. The inventory has grown from year to year, and today the Country Store is a major source of revenue for the RRVA. It would appear that the Country Store is a fairly permanent title, too, since the current manager, Nick David, resides in Placentia, California, a Los Angeles suburb, which hardly qualifies as country!

At San Diego, in 1971, the Navy and NAS Miramar had a chance to show their stuff...and they did! By now the routine was getting established...fun, games, business, golf, banquet. Joe Foss, World War II Fighter Pilot and Congressional Medal of Honor winner, was guest speaker. But according to one observer, the real shot in the arm was seeing and meeting some of the Son Tay Raiders. There were also some expected visits to T-town, but no one was lost on any of these sorties. The scholarship fund was growing, and Captain Bruce Miller, USN, was elected new CINCRAT. (42:8)

The last of the practice reunions took place at Wichita in 1972. The loss of comrades seemed to manifest itself...a hundred guys sat on the floor in the convention center going through bracelets with names of guys and their shoot down dates. It was difficult to believe that so many had not returned and that so many had been captive for so long. There were deepening commitments to the fatherless families and, of course, the scholarship fund. (42:8)

The Wichita gathering included some lighter moments, too. There were numerous Rats on the streets of Wichita and some notable incidents from the reunion. Lieutenant Colonel Ben Fuller was project officer for the event, which began with 380 Rats at the tactics conference. The group swelled to about 480 by late Saturday afternoon. In order to land at McConnell for the reunion, aircraft were to have prior permission from base operations. It was later rumored, however, that over 200 aircraft had landed there having declared inflight emergencies. (See Note Below) Colonel Wesley D. "Red" Kimball was elected CINCRAT at the business meeting. Despite an unofficial new record for alcohol consumption at the reunion, there were no injuries or complaints, and the Wichita city fathers issued a firm invitation for the River Rats to return. (8:9)

And so it was, with no one knowing that this was the last practice reunion and that next year, 1973, would herald the Homecoming and the first REAL Reunion!

NOTE: Any aircraft declaring an inflight emergency receives priority handling by air traffic control agencies and may land at the nearest suitable airfield. The author cannot confirm whether emergency status was used as a means to bypass the McConnell landing requirements stated above or the reported number of emergencies was merely coincidental.

NO PRINT

## Chapter Three

### HOMECOMING AND THE FIRST REAL REUNION, 1973

At long last, in 1973, River Rats would celebrate their first Real Reunion. America would welcome home its prisoners. They would learn about RRVA activities: the letter writing campaigns, the bumper stickers, bracelets, the scholarship fund, and the Freedom Bell. The returning Americans would, in many cases, have many adjustments to make following long absences from things the rest of us took for granted. They would teach America the true meaning of freedom and of being an American. All over the nation, the returnees would experience the hospitality of those who wished to show their appreciation to those who had sacrificed so much for the United States. In Las Vegas, it would be more special, however. The Real Reunion would bring together all those who had been there--the ones who flew over the Red River day after day and hoped their missions would result in obtaining freedom for their comrades, and those whose combat missions had ended abruptly and resulted in a living hell. Men who never forgot what they left behind and who never gave up hope that they would one day return. They would make the reunion REAL, and it would be an unforgettable experience for all.

Each year of waiting had been one too many. The RRVA had grown to 84 local forces by 1972 and had representation in nearly every state, across both the Atlantic and Pacific, and among all four services. Despite the growth, however, the group had been only "practicing", for each succeeding year had brought disappointment in that so many comrades remained in Hanoi. The day everyone waited for finally appeared imminent with the signing of the Peace Accords 27 January 1973.

As the POWs began their trip home in February, there were doubts among some as to what condition the men would be in. Americans waited with anxious anticipation for the men they were so anxious to see. The doubts were to be short lived. As the cameras rolled and we caught our first glimpses of our comrades, one might have had many thoughts. Primary among those would be recognizing the changes--the men were much thinner than we remembered, and there was evidence of the long ordeal they had endured. But they stood so tall and straight! And the smart salutes left no doubt that these were American fighting men returning to the land for which they had given so much to protect. Captain Jeremiah Denton said it all with a few eloquent words: "We are honored to have the opportunity to serve our country under difficult circumstances. We are profoundly

grateful to our Commander in Chief, and to our Nation for this day. God Bless America." (9:1)

Planning for the Real Reunion had begun long before 1973, but preparations stepped up as the dream approached reality. Until the release date was established, the River Rats were also planning for another practice reunion in 1973. The Chicago/Glenview Naval Air Station was to be the host of that affair which, of course, was overcome by events. The site was to have been the Conrad Hilton Hotel in Chicago's "Loop". The Windy City would have to wait until 1974 to welcome the River Rats.

On 17 March 1973, the National Board of Officers met with CINCRATs at Nellis AFB, to plan the Real Reunion. On hand for that meeting was Navy Captain Howard E. "Howie" Rutledge, who had been released from "the Hanoi Hilton" only a few weeks earlier. He provided important information concerning the thoughts and desires of the POWs. At that time, the extensive organization the POWs had established was new information in America. The POWs had already given considerable thought to a reunion and they supported the River Rats' plan for an August meeting in Las Vegas. While there were to be other reunions of POWs prior to August, Captain Rutledge indicated that this would be an important one because it would include both the POWs and their close wartime comrades. (9:3)

Emotions ran high throughout America as the POWs returned and during subsequent events. Between the POWs and their military comrades, however, emotions were magnified by empathy. Such feelings were present in the March meeting, as Captain Rutledge expressed gratitude on behalf of all the POWs, for all that the Rats had done for their wives and families. All River Rats were well aware of the organization's purpose and were proud of significant efforts such as the Scholarship Foundation, and other support of the families. The full meaning and deep satisfaction was suddenly electric, however, to those present when a man, who had endured seven years in the Hanoi Hilton and whose son had received a River Rat scholarship, looked them in the eyes and said, "Thank you from the bottom of my heart." (9:3)

So the Real Reunion was scheduled for 24-26 August 1973. This gathering was taking its cue from a surge of pride shown by America for its military men and from the tremendous professionalism demonstrated by the POWs during repatriation. Events were to be a bit more formal with the Friday evening attire to be coat and tie; Saturday would be "black tie." The River Rats had invited the President to be the Saturday guest speaker; however, he was not able to attend.

Las Vegas had occupied top billing for many Rats prior to 1973, but this time it was even more special. River Rats from around the world converged at the Convention Center and booked half the rooms in town. It was time to share a drink with those friends



you'd been praying for these past years. The crowd danced to the music of Sy Zentner's Orchestra until the wee hours.

Saturday commenced with some River Rat standards but the evening would bring the main event. The early risers (and some who hadn't stopped since Friday) gathered for morning golf. There was a business meeting for the Rats and a fashion show and luncheon for the ladies at the Desert Inn Hotel Showroom. As evening approached, it was time for the main event. Alexander Haig was guest speaker for ceremonies in the rotunda and then, at long last, the clapper was pulled to ring the long silent Freedom Bell. Virtually every Rat in the room was pulling the cord. The bell provided a less than resonant "thunk". For many, the tone quality was insignificant compared to the feelings of pride that close comrades too long separated were now together. For others, the dull sound served as a reminder that there were still many Americans whose fate remained unknown. (42:9)

Saturday evening brought more celebration along with dinner and dancing in the rotunda. News that evening included the announcement that Captain Paul Merchant, USN, and Colonel Charles Vasiliadis would lead the Rats for the next year. Also, the scholarship fund held a total of \$76,317.00! There was one event that stands out in one's memory from that evening. In a spontaneous gesture which symbolized the group's unity, 2700 yellow napkins were tied together to form a huge "ribbon" around the banquet hall. As with the ringing of the Freedom Bell the day before, there was a special joy and a sense of unity among people reacquainted at last. (42:9)

NO PRINT

## Chapter Four

### REUNIONS AND ACTIVITIES, 1974-84

1973 was indeed a great year for the River Rats as they welcomed home the POWs from Hanoi. It was not the end of the story, however. Far from it. There were still hundreds of American servicemen unaccounted for. They would not be forgotten. And there were many more who were never coming home. The River Rats would serve their memories and their families. One of the more visible forms of River Rat support was the scholarship fund.

The scholarship fund was established in 1970 to demonstrate concern for the families of fellow River Rats who were prisoners of war, listed as missing in action, or who had been killed in action (in North Vietnam). Scholarship recipients were to be selected on the basis of need, demonstrated academic achievements, college entrance exam results, and accomplishments in school, church, and social activities. An initial grant of \$500.00 from ITT was soon followed by others. There were twenty-nine applicants for the first scholarships. The three individuals chosen received \$1000.00 each. They were Donald M. Denton, Davis H. Hagerman, and Christine Ann Brinckmann. (5:10)

The fund grew rapidly. Corporations, individuals, and groups combined to make a long list of contributors. Donations arrived in sums of up to \$5000.00. As more money came in, so it was disbursed to more and more deserving recipients. By 1984, a total of 331 grants had been awarded totalling \$210,000.000. (48:5) Today the fund is managed by the Heritage Foundation of Washington, DC, and is administered by a Scholarship Foundation Board of Directors.

The first Real Reunion was an event unto itself. None that participated will ever forget the special significance of that gathering. It can also be said, however, that fighter pilots like to party. Thus, the Real Reunions that followed from 1974 onward were happy occasions. Las Vegas would be a favorite gathering place but there were other memorable Rat gatherings from 1974-84. The following paragraphs will sample some highlights.

Chicago, The Windy City, and NAS Glenview hosted the second Real Reunion. The Hilton was the location for the affair, which

attracted large numbers of River Rats, whose unusual party suits attracted the stares of many guests. Admiral Thomas C. Moorer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, addressed the Saturday night Dining In. The role of CINCRAT was passed to Colonel Charles Vasiliadis. His Vice would be Captain Henry Halleland, USN. Capping the weekend's activities was an audio-visual presentation of air war activities. It drew participation from viewers. One common punctuation was the shout of "Dead Bug" accompanied by a thrash of bodies dropping to the floor. The review of air war activities surfaced a more serious message for the future of the organization, however. (42:9)

The lessons of Southeast Asia were many and expensive, and all hoped they would teach us to avoid similar mistakes in the future. To that end, it became clear the River Rats needed to expand their goals. The River Rats needed to "tell it like it was" to all the "new kids on the block." In addition to providing entertainment, the opportunity to tell a war story could provide a measure of training to those who hadn't experienced air combat. River Rats would eventually expand the organization to enable them to share pleasant memories and the serious lessons of their combat experience. This significant development will be discussed further in the next chapter. (42:9)

The Rats returned to Las Vegas in 1975, in what would later become a standard pattern of alternate years in Vegas. For the first time, there was no transportation assistance from the Air Force, so Rats arrived in Las Vegas via a variety of innovative vehicles. The Holloman AFB "Red Dork River Rats" arrived in a "stylish sleeper"--an already well-traveled school bus, complete with curtained windows. The Stardust hosted the River Rats and willingly collected large quantities of River Rat money at the gaming tables. More than 400 Rats attended and it is rumored there were at least that many yellow frisbees sailing around halls and meeting rooms. (No one ever did figure out how to tie those hummers together, though.) (14:1)

There were business meetings, golf, and lots of war stories. General John P. Flynn was the Saturday night guest speaker. The new CINCRAT would be Commander Joe Tully, with Lieutenant Colonel Jim Rhodes as Vice. It was a terrific weekend despite the unusual weather, which provided the usual sunshine, plus rain, hail, and...that's right...SNOW in Las Vegas. Nonetheless, the Rats voted overwhelmingly to return to Las Vegas in 1976. (42:9)

In 1976, the sun was back in Las Vegas, and so were the ladies, following two years of stag reunions. Most Rats, although not all, supported the inclusion of wives and female guests. The Sahara (known as Sierra to some) Hotel was host to that year's gathering, which was also commonly known as Vegas III. Several hundred frisbees had survived from '75 and returned for an encore. (42:9)

The usual golf and general business meeting headed up the Saturday schedule. The afternoon symposium was especially "Sierra Hotel", as it included a series of briefings on new weapon system and evaluation studies. These included the A-10, F-14, F-15, F-16, F-18, and AWACS, as well as AIMVAL/ACEVAL. All were the courtesy of Lieutenant Colonel Jim Rhodes. General Robin Olds was the featured speaker Saturday evening, and reports followed that his singing was every bit as noteworthy as his speech. The new CINCRAT was Colonel George Acree, while Jim Rhodes was retained for an unprecedented second term as Vice CINCRAT. (16:5)

1977 brought an opportunity for East Coast River Rats who had been unable to attend Las Vegas reunions in 1975-76. Norfolk, Virginia, was the location for the fifth Real Reunion. The Omni International Hotel played host to over 350 Rats who arrived from all parts of the world and by all means of conveyance--one Rat showed up in a boat! (20:4-5)

1977 also featured an all-service symposium. Each service presented a how-goes-it and featured items were "VSTOL in the Future Navy" and the "USAF Tactical Air Command, Past, Present, and Future." Senator Jake Garn (R-Utah) was the featured speaker and provided a stirring address on the state and attitude of our Union. He was also inducted as an Associate Member of the RRVA. Captain Jack Fellowes (USN) was elected CINCRAT and Colonel Bill Baechle became his Vice. (20:4-5)

It was back to Las Vegas in 1978--Vegas IV was headquartered at the Sahara (Sierra) Hotel, though sorties emanated to other Strip locations during the weekend. The business meeting was a serious one and resulted in approval of a revised edition of the River Rat bylaws. Unanimous approval of the nominated slate of officers resulted in Frank "Frosty" Sheridan being elected the first two-year CINCRAT. Norm Frith became the new Vice. (23:1-3)

Brigadier General Robinson Risner was the well-known and respected guest speaker Saturday night. He moved everyone in the audience with memories about life in the Hanoi Hilton and reflections of the faith that kept him, and many comrades, going. He revived thoughts about days that were dim in many memories and freshened commitments of all Rats to the organization's objectives. (23:3)

With such a moving event the feature of Saturday night, it was indeed striking that the following Wednesday would produce a much different perspective. John Vinocur, of the New York Times, wrote an article based on his attendance at a River Rat reunion that depicted an immature and ridiculous crowd of grown men drinking and playing silly games. (23:1)

1979 was the tenth anniversary of the first stateside River Rat reunion. It was the second San Antonio reunion and was headquartered at the Menger Hotel. Once again, attendance was

lower than at the Las Vegas gatherings, a rather unusual circumstance for a military town such as San Antonio. Nonetheless, it was a super weekend. The Menger was an excellent host and provided a terrific Mexican buffet on Friday. As expected, San Antonio provided a warm welcome, too, with its plethora of activities ranging from historical sights to outstanding shopping. The River Walk, as usual, drew many takers and, amazingly enough, there were no "drowned Rats." (26:1-2)

The River Rat reunion was held on the same weekend as Randolph AFB's 560th Annual Homecoming Dining In which provided a double drawing card for many POWs. Saturday symposium presentations were made by Goodyear, Litton, and McDonnell-Douglas, as well as the Red Flag Briefing Team, led by Red Flag Commander, Colonel Jerry Gentry. Having originally invited Henry Kissinger to speak Saturday evening, it was a disappointment when he later cancelled. Admiral U. S. Grant Sharp held the audience spellbound, however, and performances by the Lackland AFB Honor Guard and University of Texas Longhorn Choral Group brought tears to many eyes. Bob Gadd was elected as the new Vice CINCRAT, a fitting reward for his S.H. performance as host of the reunion. (25:1)

It was Vegas V in 1980 with the River Rats returning to the Sahara. The reunion was dedicated to Colonel Arthur D. "Bull" Simons, who led the Son Tay prison raid, and to Maxine McCaffery, who painted the famous "Fighter Pilot in SEA." Both had made their "Final Sweep" in 1979. Attendance, which had dwindled in recent years, was back up to 400 or more, which raised spirits on the reunion committee. (30:1-2)

A multitude of various colored S.H. party suits accented the Friday evening gathering, at which beer consumption was up at least as much, if not considerably more, than attendance. Congressman Bob Dornan (R-Calif) provided an impromptu appeal for our MIAs, which was later followed by an impassioned appeal by a Rat to the Sahara gambling crowd. Copying Moses, he yelled at full volume to the crowd below, "Let my people go, Ayatollah!" Saturday arrived with golf for some, while displays from Rockwell, Westinghouse, Northrop, and General Dynamics informed those at the hotel. During the annual meeting, Ann Mills Griffiths spoke about POW/MIA issues and activities of the National League of Families. (30:1-2)

The symposium was a true display of talent and information. The Soviet Air Force (Aggressor) story and Thunderbird film clips captivated all. Major General John Singlaub, USA, who would later speak at the banquet, amplified the intelligence information already provided. Saturday evening was outstanding, as usual, with excellent presentations from General Singlaub and the traditional Rat film, courtesy this time of Dave McBride. Colonel Bob Gadd assumed the role of CINCRAT and Lieutenant Colonel John Piowaty became the new Vice. (30:1-2)

About the 1981 Real Reunion #9, the Spring 1981 MIG Sweep stated "From north of the Red River of Vietnam--To south of the Red River of Texas Comes [sic] the Greatest Fighter Pilots in the history of aerial warfare." Austin and the Sheraton-Crest Hotel hosted the Rats, who drew national attention from the television show, "Real People." When the dust settled, they had twelve hours of footage, from which six and one-half minutes were aired. (42:10)

Mr. H. Donald Gelber of the State Department was Saturday's guest speaker who, together with Ann Mills Griffiths of the National League of Families, provided insight and renewed hopes for resolution of the MIA issue. The Board of Officers was to be relatively unchanged for the next year but had a new addition in the form of an executive secretary. Patti Sheridan assumed duties as the new employee and has provided immeasurable service to the River Rats ever since. (42:10)

In 1982, it was back to the West for Vegas VI. Part of the success was credited to industry support of the symposium which featured presentations by Westinghouse, Hughes, Martin-Marietta, and Ford Aerospace. Lieutenant General Jack Chain was guest speaker Saturday evening and brought the crowd alive with a super address. (42:10)

Attendance was down somewhat in '82 but that was attributed to the fact that many Rats were already looking ahead to the tenth Real Reunion in '83. To prepare for that, and to lead the Rats through the next two years, the River Rats elected John Piowaty as CINCRAT, with Larry Pickett as Vice. (42:10)

Vegas VII, the tenth Real Reunion...it all came together for this one. Quantity and Quality were twins who led the show. Activities and registration began Wednesday, 27 April, and by Friday, over 800 had checked in at the Sahara. Despite the overflow crowd, the Sahara put on a super dinner, and it took most of the night to complete the friendship renewals. (42:10-17)

Saturday opened with many of the usual events but the day would develop into something quite extraordinary. As always, industry was well-represented by General Dynamics, Raytheon, Northrop, and Westinghouse. The fashion show featured River Rats and their ladies who modeled some fine clothing from Goldwaters. By Saturday evening, the crowd reached 1000! The guest speaker was a special River Rat who was also Air Force Chief of Staff. General Gabriel shared messages from the Secretary of the Air Force Verne Orr, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John Vessey, and each of the other service chiefs. General Gabriel's speech was outstanding and he was followed by a super entertainer, Fred Travalena, who captivated the crowd before leaving it on its back, palms and soles up. His "Dead Bug" routine may have leveled the largest crowd in history, not to mention seniority. On a more serious

note, George Schlatter accepted an appreciation award as Executive Producer for "Real People," recognizing his River Rats segment which had been aired the previous Veterans' Day. (42:15)

There are many stories from the tenth Real Reunion, not the least of which is the all-time high of \$24,000 collected for the Scholarship Fund. But one item typified this gathering as it brought together memories of previous years and created a mood that is the trademark of River Rats, their friends and families and, indeed, all patriotic Americans. As the band entertained with its version of "Tie a Yellow Ribbon 'Round the Old Oak Tree," there was the spontaneous moment of unity which resulted in a "ribbon" of napkins--at least 1000 of them, tied together, encircling the entire crowd. They were white this time instead of yellow, but that wasn't important. The message was loud and clear. (42:16)

One might wonder how to follow a show such as the 1983 gathering in Las Vegas. Well, the numbers attending were less, but those that showed in 1984 were certainly not lacking in enthusiasm. Fort Worth had plenty to offer and the eleventh Real Reunion started strong at the Kahler Green Oaks Inn. A Wednesday "fun club" met in the Rat Suite so the fans could share a few stories and drinks with Dan Pastorini, NFL quarterback gone River Rat. Results of the evening included over \$500 for the Scholarship Fund. On Thursday it was Billy Bob's for barbeque, and River Rats made sure each of the 63 bars in the 2½ acre facility had a fair share of business. The Friday golf tournament was sponsored by Raytheon, complete with yellow golf balls. (The golf balls wouldn't tie together any better than the shots would and, judging by directional control of many shots, Raytheon could have done a lot more by way of guidance control units for those little hummers.) (46:5)

Saturday went well, too. The CINCRAT meeting was well attended as were the displays provided by Pratt and Whitney, Raytheon, Hughes, and General Dynamics. Lieutenant Colonel Jerry Venanzi updated the Rats on the POW/MIA issue with information from his office in the Pentagon. Later, the evening crowd was spellbound listening to guest speaker H. Ross Perot tell of the rescue of his employees from Iran. When he was announced as the first recipient of an Annual River Rat Award, Mr. Perot responded by announcing that he would share it with the Air Rescue and Recovery Service. There was much more at the eleventh Real Reunion but it was indeed special when the Europe Rats produced their check for, that's right, \$10,000! Together with other generous contributions, 1984 was the biggest to date--well over \$26,000 collected. To carry the Rats forward to greater challenges were new CINCRAT Larry Pickett and his Vice, Bob Connelly. (46:5)

The years 1974-1984 were much more than a series of annual reunions. While reunions brought together large number of Rats,



there were many local and regional activities, during which smaller groups of River Rats did large numbers of things. The RRVA was active worldwide, continuing its support of MIA/KIA and their families, spurring the Scholarship Fund to new heights, and sponsoring memorials and tributes to those who sacrificed all for our freedom.

Some special tributes to those who didn't return deserve mention. One is the Memorial Walk dedicated by the McConnell Pack in 1976 "to those who served McConnell AFB and this great nation...." Also dedicated was a River Rat (oak) tree. On the day of dedication, after three Thuds roared by and the Air Force Song commenced, five River Rats proceeded unannounced to the tree and tied five yellow ribbons around it, as a pledge that they would not forget those who did not return. (16:9)

In March, 1977, the Missing Man Monument was presented to the USAF by the San Antonio Chapter of the River Rats. Conceived six years earlier by the River Rats as a means to usefully spend monies earned from POW/MIA bracelet sales, more than four years of work went into the sculpture, the work of Mark Pritchett, a San Antonio sculptor. Four monolithic aircraft forms were fabricated from plate aluminum finished with a reflective surface. They stand more than 25 feet high. Inscribed at the base of the monument at Randolph AFB are the words, "WE WHO CAME HOME MUST NEVER FORGET THOSE WHO COULD NOT." (19:3)

Also, in June, 1977, Ramstein River Rats planted and dedicated an American oak tree and plaque in front of the Ramstein Officers' Club. During the dedication ceremony, several yellow ribbons were tied on the tree. They are replaced periodically. Since then there has been another plaque added to the stone which represents the National League of Families. There is now a lighted flag which flies at all times, as well as an abundance of flowers and shrubs. (21:1)

Partly due to the large numbers of Rats who are unable to attend the stateside Real Reunions, Ramstein has hosted the Europe Rats at a Europe Reunion in recent years. Not only have they been great social events, featuring famous persons from around Europe, but they have represented the culmination of Europe Rats' yearly activities which have resulted in amazing support of the Scholarship Fund. In 1983, the Europe Rats donated \$5,000.00 which they doubled at Fort Worth in 1984! There's no telling what surprise they'll have in '85, but the Europe Rats stand as a glowing tribute to the activities of local packs around the world.

At the time of this writing, the River Rats are preparing for their 12th Real Reunion at the Hacienda Hotel in Las Vegas, at the end of April. This chapter has reviewed a number of reunions and sampled a very few of the other River Rat activities that trace the organization's history. But what is it that ties

together this long series of social and charitable activities? In a few words, it's people and commitment. With that in mind, the next chapter will look at River Rat membership, its development from the war years to now. More specifically, topics discussed will be the evolution of the River Rat charter, the organization's objectives, and the relationship between organization and members.

## Chapter Five

### OBJECTIVES, MEMBERSHIP, CHARTER EVOLUTION

The Red River Valley Association is not unlike many associations in that its original membership has matured; some have made their Final Sweep. At the same time, however, it is different because organization objectives have been changing since the River Rats were started. Consequently, as the organization has evolved, so has membership. In the next few pages, I'll look at some of the changes.

When Scrappy Johnson first started the River Rat organization at Korat, he wanted to survey the ideas of some seasoned combat veterans to make the daily attacks against North Vietnam a little easier. The Alpha strike packages involved large numbers of aircraft and coordination was not always too smooth. At the same time, the tactics symposium was designed to be a pleasant experience; so it's safe to say the early Rats had a social as well as a military objective.

In 1969, as River Rat operations moved to the United States, the organization developed a formal charter and broadened its purpose. In addition to sharing camaraderie and the lessons of their combat experience, River Rats felt the American public needed to know more about those that had not returned from Southeast Asia, in particular, the POWs and those listed as missing. Further, the organization sought to assist the families of those individuals as they struggled through difficult times.

Early proposed charters for the RRVA agreed upon a primary objective and suggested possible additional objectives and provided for changes to be made as necessary. The earliest draft listed the objective as follows:

The objective of The Red River Valley Fighter Pilots' Association is primarily to further the continuance of the superb fellowship and camaraderie which evolved between aircrews who fought the war over the Red River Valley of North Vietnam, and to hold an annual reunion to further that end. Where possible, assist our fellow airmen who have become prisoners of war of the North Vietnamese.

"Assist the families" was handwritten at the end, indicating the concern for them. The re-drafted charter shortened the objective as follows:

The primary objective of the River Rats is to continue the superb fellowship that developed between aircrews who fought in the war over the Red River Valley of North Vietnam. Other objectives will be added when deemed appropriate and worthy. All objectives must be obtainable within the laws and policies of the United States of America and the United States Armed Forces. (55:1)

At the same time, these were the membership categories: "All aircrew members of United States Forces who flew at least one combat mission in Package VI (See Note)..." are eligible for membership. Those who became a prisoner of war were automatically made life members. Further, "Any United States aircrew member shot down over Vietnam who was killed as a result of being shot down or whose continued existence is never confirmed (MIA) will be placed on the River Rats' Honor Roll." (55:1-2)

Determining criteria for membership and establishing objectives were not as straightforward as one might think. For example, even the original organization title raised questions. Red River Valley Fighter Pilots' Association raised questions because the term "fighter pilot" suggested a narrow membership exclusive of many individuals who flew other types of aircraft and those non-pilot crewmembers in multi-place aircraft. Another item of concern was the requirement to have flown a mission in Package VI. There were many who flew demanding combat missions in other areas, such as the Navy in Packages III and IV. Were they to be ineligible because of geography? (One may remember that the name River Rat and the organization's emblem were chosen from submissions at Ubon in 1967. Again, was there intent to exclude some combat veterans from the new organization?) Further, there was a question regarding a special membership category for those senior officers who may have ordered missions flown and/or directed combat operations though they might not have been direct participants in the air. These questions generated much discussion, and while they did not impede formation of the new charter, they posed questions which would not be resolved for several years.

The 1971 bylaws established a category of associate River Rats to include "senior officers...in direct command of River Rats and who actually ordered combat missions flown into Package VI...". Their membership required approval of the

NOTE: As mentioned earlier, packages were geographic regions of North Vietnam. Package I was the lowest threat area. Package VI included Hanoi, Haiphong, and the Red River Valley, and was regarded as the most heavily defended airspace in the history of war.

regular membership and they were not eligible to "hold office, vote, or participate in policy decisions of the Red River Valley Fighter Pilots' Association." (56:2)

The River Rats wanted nothing to do with individuals who had an opportunity to see combat but, for personal reasons, chose not to. On the other hand, by 1974 there was a proposal to establish an Associate Member category. It would include both senior command officers who did not fly air combat and officers who flew in combat but whose missions did not require them to enter Package VI. To become an Associate Member, one would have to be nominated by a member in good standing with endorsement from two others, then be unanimously approved by secret ballot of the National Board. The category would be limited to 1000 members. (River Rat active membership at the time was roughly 5000.) (15:5)

By 1975, the criteria for Associate membership were relaxed somewhat although there was yet to be a formal change to the charter. Associate Members were now required to be "worthwhile nominees" subject to the membership nomination and approval (as mentioned in the preceding paragraph). Thus, one could become an Associate Member even if he had not participated in combat. The idea was that there were some who "would have if they could have" that might make meaningful contributions to the River Rats organization. In addition to the secret ballot for membership approval, however, any member in good standing who could show cause why a nominee should not be a Rat would have 60 days to notify the National Board. Lack of a negative response would confirm Associate membership.

One reason the membership requirements were changing was that the River Rats were changing. Their commitment to the POW/MIAs and their families had been manifested in many ways. Mentioned earlier were several of the memorials and the Scholarship Fund. By May, 1975, the Scholarship Fund was market valued at over \$75,000.00. Since its inception, 83 scholarships totalling \$64,000.00 had been awarded. (14:4) River Rats were also committed to US efforts to receive a full and just accounting of those 2500 servicemen still listed as MIA. River Rats were proud of their accomplishments but recognized that there was still much to be done. The Association was attempting to recognize history and, at the same time, keep an eye toward the future. As Lieutenant Colonel Fred Watkins, Secretary, Air Force Affairs, wrote in the Winter, 1975, MIG SWEEP:

Person to person verbal war stories and actual experience shared in various training programs will preserve some of the knowledge (of River Rat accomplishments) for a limited time...Lessons learned in tactics and procedures need to be discussed and polished plus preserved for future aviators. What the Rats did and wanted to do may

not be remembered if the organization fades quietly away prematurely. Camaraderie stimulates thought that there must be a better way.

In May, 1974, the River Rat Articles of Incorporation formally changed the organization's name from Red River Valley Fighter Pilots' Association to Red River Valley Association. At the same time, the purposes of the organization were as follows:

1. To create concern and generate awareness for the plight of those men, the Prisoners of War and the Missing in Action, who fought in the Vietnam conflict, or were associated with military operations in Route Package Six, which encompasses the Red River Valley, Hanoi, and Haiphong area and runs to the Chinese borders.
2. To act in a charitable capacity and give aid and comfort to the family members of the POW/MIAs and help them through their waiting vigil.
3. To establish a scholarship fund for the children of these POW/MIA/KIAs who made unprecedented sacrifices for their country.
4. To engage in the business of investing on behalf of itself and others, any part of its capital and such additional funds as it may obtain, or any interest therein, and selling or otherwise disposing of the same or any part thereof or interest therein to accomplish the foregoing.
5. To acquire, purchase, own, hold, use, operate, develop, lease, mortgage, pledge, exchange, convey, sell, transfer, or otherwise dispose of and to invest, trade, sell, or deal in real and personal property of every kind and description or any interest therein to accomplish the foregoing.
6. In general to do such other things as are incidental to the foregoing or necessary or desirable in order to accomplish the foregoing.

In December, 1976, a seventh objective was added:

7. To develop educational programs to interest, encourage, and inform American youth and the public in the purpose, potential, and safety of American Aviation in order to prevent and minimize the losses of United States citizens in future armed conflicts involving the United States of America.

Though not stated as an objective, the Fifth Article of Incorporation stated the River Rats were "to continue the superb fellowship that developed between aircrews who fought in the war over the Red River Valley in North Vietnam."

Though the River Rat Charter showed broader purpose, efforts were needed to revitalize the organization. Despite the expansion of objectives and the many national and local River Rat activities, membership dropped to 1122 in April, 1976. Part of the loss was due to the difficulty in tracking all the River Rats through frequent changes of station. River Rats had become less likely to participate in national events such as the annual reunion because all travel was at personal expense. (In earlier years, some government transportation was available and Rats could often fly unit aircraft cross-country to the reunion site.) In 1977, however, National Secretary, Bob Thompson, worked to organize and computerize membership rolls. That, coupled with regular printing of MIG Sweeps and a newsletter, helped increase membership to 1992 by early 1977. The National Board was meeting monthly and coordination between the National Board and Local Forces was on the increase. Further, the Scholarship Fund had distributed \$18,500.00 to 28 young people for the 1976-77 academic year. So, after a decline in the years following the Homecoming, the River Rat organization was again growing in purpose and participation. (17:2)

The Red River Valley Association continued to grow following the 1977 turnaround. In 1979, the Principles and Objectives were once again revised. They follow:

The Red River Valley Association was organized as a military fraternity of fighter pilots to commemorate inter-service teamwork, strong esprit de corps, and unprecedented sacrifices demonstrated by American fighting men during the campaign over North Vietnam. The association established Pride of Patriotism and Defense of the Constitution of the United States of America as its guiding principals.

From these principals the following objectives have been derived:

- To provide an active forum for discussion and debate of aerial warfare issues.
- To encourage and support aerospace activities to insure that the United States of America maintains its freedom and leadership status among nations.
- To encourage continuation of the superb inter-service fellowship born during the Vietnam conflict.

- To provide comfort and support for the family members of those uniformed service men KIA/MIA who were associated with the war in North Vietnam, to include scholarship assistance to their children.
- To provide assistance in the education of persons in the fields related to aviation and space disciplines.
- To encourage programs supportive of developing in American youth those attributes that are basic characteristics of Association principles.

The 1979 statement combines the original principles established by Scrappy Johnson with the multitude of River Rat activities and objectives that had evolved since. The principles and objectives clearly describe the River Rat organization and have remained unchanged in an August, 1984, revision of the bylaws.

What had started as a tactics conference at Korat, Thailand, had developed into a complex organization. While River Rats were firmly committed to the camaraderie of those special experiences shared in the skies over North Vietnam, they were also very interested in events of today and tomorrow. The changes to the River Rat charter were manifestation of a concern for both the future of aviation and the well-being of a democratic society. Having looked at the development of the Red River Valley Association, one should look ahead to the future.



## Chapter Six

### THE FUTURE

The preceding chapters have chronicled the development of the Red River Valley Association, surveying its objectives and some of its activities. The organization has grown and increased its commitments while, at the same time, it retained its original purpose of maintaining the fellowship and camaraderie developed in the air war over Vietnam. On the other hand, there have been numerous challenges. Not all River Rats supported the concept of Associate Members to enlarge and perpetuate the organization. It has been difficult to retain and trace members who are on the move as often as the military demands. There have been questions as to what issues the RRVA should support and how it should state its opinion to the public. The key to the River Rats' success has been an active and committed membership. It is the ideas of members that have generated new charter objectives and made the RRVA more than a social and fraternal society which enables the veterans to have a big party once a year. And it will be the members who will determine new objectives, attain or modify existing ones, and chart the future course of the River Rats.

The evolution of the RRVA is unique, in terms of organizational objectives and membership. The tactical meetings that Scrappy Johnson initiated in Thailand were intended to work around a slow-moving military command hierarchy which impeded development and implementation of new combat tactics. The environment for those early discussions was distinctly informal with plenty of social emphasis. The social emphasis remains today but annual reunions now combine formal and informal social events with a host of business and professional activities. Within the social framework evolved some very serious objectives, which have served not only to perpetuate the RRVA but to expand it in recent years.

The move of the River Rat organization from Thailand to the United States was the first significant change. The stateside River Rats brought the POW/MIA issue to the American public and worked to aid and support POW/MIA families. Soon after the move to the States, the first formal River Rat charter was drafted. A Scholarship Fund was established to assist POW/MIA children seeking college educations. The success of the scholarship program demonstrated a need for long-term support and increased funds. At least in part, the Scholarship Fund resulted in the expanded membership of the RRVA.

Financial support came from individual contributions and fund raising efforts by local Rat Packs, as well as from corporate donations. Defense-related corporations not only provided financial aid; they also contributed a wealth of professional knowledge through displays of the latest technological developments and informative briefings at River Rat reunions. Thus the corporations serve both the Charter objectives and the membership at-large. With such generous support, the Scholarship Fund has become a proud trademark of the RRVA. At the same time, the Scholarship Fund was closely related to significant organizational change.

An important aspect of the Scholarship Fund success was the RRVA's status as a tax-exempt, non-profit organization. To retain this status, the River Rats could not have a closed membership. Financial status, then, became a key factor in leading the River Rats to an expanded membership. Strong feelings developed around the issue of Associate Membership; to some extent they still exist. To those who identified closely with the preservation of the special camaraderie that developed over North Vietnam, Associate Membership represented a dilution of that deep personal alliance felt among an elite group. On the other hand, expanded River Rat objectives offered plenty of activity for a larger membership and many Rats felt there were important lessons to be passed on to young aviators, especially those who "would have if they could have." That is to say that many young aviators would have tested their skill in combat had the war not ended before they were combat ready. Unanimous was the feeling among Rats that they wanted nothing to do with an officer who avoided conflict out of fear or cowardice. At the same time, most Rats also wanted to guard against the organization becoming an association of patch collectors. The official position has been made clear. Associate members are now an integral part of the RRVA, but sponsorship of a Charter River Rat in good standing is a prerequisite to Associate Member status. That requirement enables the RRVA to offer membership only to persons who can clearly relate to and support Charter objectives. Continued effort is necessary to build and maintain consensus among all categories of River Rats and sustain a viable organization in the future. Charter Rats have much to offer today's young aviators who can learn the lessons of our Southeast Asia air experience and apply that knowledge to future airpower challenges.

The unique qualities of River Rats are what will enable the organization to meet and sustain all its objectives. Some objectives could be attained by any group of concerned Americans. For example, a full and just accounting of MIA/KIA and support of their families reflect basic American ideals. Those are key elements of the River Rat Charter, but there are others which require special expertise. Only River Rats can preserve the special camaraderie they experienced. Only River Rats can analyze their unique lessons learned in Southeast Asia. And if

there are historical lessons to be carried forward, only River Rats can share them with today's young aviators and American youth. Associate members help to create a forum to stimulate discussion of such issues and provide a basis for carrying those ideas forward and applying them to new situations.

The study of history and application of its lessons can help us to avoid repeating past mistakes. Bringing together those who are a part of aviation history and those who represent its future affords a special opportunity. In the face of rapidly changing technology, strategy and tactics must evolve to keep pace with new capabilities. On the other hand, some elements of doctrine and basic principles of war can guide and direct application of these new thoughts. History provides the foundation for this process of applying new ideas according to established principles. The Red River Valley Association enables those who made history to share their lessons with those who will make history tomorrow. For this reason, Associate Rats are a key element of a viable River Rat organization. Together with Charter Rats, Associates can both commemorate past events and experiences while better preparing for the future.

Check six. Check twelve...

NO PRINT

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NOTE: Currently there are no formal references to the Red River Valley Association. One primary data source for this work was the MIG Sweep, a newsletter published quarterly by the RRVA. Each edition of the newsletter is identified as a separate volume. To simplify footnoting, the first 48 bibliography entries will correspond to MIG Sweep volumes. Other sources will then follow.

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PROPOSED CHARTER

THE RED RIVER VALLEY FIGHTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION





# CHARTER

of

## THE RED RIVER VALLEY FIGHTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION (RIVER RATS)

### ARTICLE I

#### IDENTITY

The name of this organization is "The Red River Valley Fighter Pilots Association (River Rats)." The emblem will be in the form of a shield which has a black background. On the shield is a geographical representation of the Red River and Thud Ridge. The Red River is depicted by a line running from top left to bottom right with Thud Ridge above the line.

### ARTICLE II

#### OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of the River Rats is to continue the superb fellowship that developed between aircrews who fought in the war over the Red River Valley of North Vietnam. Other objectives will be added when deemed appropriate and worthy. All objectives must be obtainable within the laws and policies of the United States of America and the United States Armed Forces.

### ARTICLE III

#### MEMBERSHIP

All aircrew members of United States Forces who flew at least one combat mission in Package VI, from start of the bombing of North Vietnam in 1965 until hostilities are legally terminated, are eligible to be a member. Any United States aircrew member shot down over North Vietnam who became a Prisoner of War in North Vietnam will automatically be a lifetime member and

member shot down over North Vietnam who was killed as a result of being shot down or whose continued existence is never confirmed (MIA) will be placed on the River Rats' Honor Roll.

#### ARTICLE IV

##### DUES

The River Rats' initiation fee is \$5.00 and entitles the member to a membership card and certificate. Dues will be determined by the membership in accordance with Article V. This is a nonprofit organization and all funds will be used for the benefit of the overall membership unless otherwise stipulated by a majority vote of members present for any scheduled meeting. Pins, patches, etc. will be made available to the membership on a cost basis. Automatic lifetime members are exempt from both the initiation fee and yearly dues.

#### ARTICLE V

##### MEETINGS

A River Rats reunion will be held annually. Special meetings to address urgent requirements may be called by the Board of Officers. The reunion will commence with a meeting of the members, and a majority of those present will constitute membership approval of dues and other association business requiring such approval.

#### ARTICLE VI

##### OFFICERS

Officers of the River Rats are: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Sergeant-at-Arms. River Rats officers will be elected during

each annual reunion. Elections will be conducted within parliamentary procedures and nominations may be submitted by the designated committee or any active member attending the reunion. Individuals placed in nomination for any office must be an active member, dues paid, and in good standing with the association. These officers will be empowered to carry out their duties to the association but excluding committal of the association of any of its membership to pecuniary liability beyond the association's uncommitted liquid assets.

## ARTICLE VII

### COMMITTEES

River Rats standing committees will consist of:

- a. Committee for Planning Annual Reunion.
- b. Committee for Nominating Officers.
- c. Committee for Purchasing and Distributing.
- d. Committee for Association Objectives.

The Reunion Committee will be responsible for planning and arranging the annual reunion. The location, date, and other important factors will be subject to approval by the Board of Officers.

Officers Nominating Committee will determine and place in nomination the names of three qualified members for each position. The nominations will be coordinated with the Board of Officers and will be made available to the membership for consideration at least 90 days prior to each annual reunion. Ballot by proxy will not be authorized; however, absentee ballots may be mailed directly to the Secretary prior to election.

sible for procuring River Rats approved pins, patches, membership cards, etc. These items will be distributed to each member who requests the item(s) and forwards advanced payment.

Objective Committee will be responsible for the pursuit of association objectives as directed by the Board of Officers.

The previously listed and other necessary committees will be appointed by the Board of Officers.

#### ARTICLE VIII

##### INDIVIDUAL MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Each member is expected to conduct himself in a manner that will reflect merit upon the United States Armed Forces and fellow commissioned officers. Additionally, each member of the River Rats is responsible for notifying the secretary of any change of address.

#### ARTICLE IX

##### AMENDMENTS

This charter may not be altered or amended except by majority vote of the active members. Further, proposed alterations or amendments will not be brought before the membership for vote unless detailed written justification for each proposal is forwarded to and receipt confirmed by the Board of Officers at least 30 days prior to a scheduled meeting.

RED RIVER VALLEY ASSOCIATION, INCORPORATED

BY LAWS

(Revised August 1, 1984)

RED RIVER VALLEY ASSOCIATION, INCORPORATED  
(RED RIVER VALLEY FIGHTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION)  
(As Revised September, 1983)

ARTICLE I

IDENTITY

Section 1 - NAME. The name of this organization is "The Red River Valley Fighter Pilots Association (River Rats)" doing business as "The Red River Valley Association, Incorporated" (hereinafter referred to as RRVA).

Section 2 - PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES. The RED RIVER VALLEY ASSOCIATION was organized as a military fraternity of fighter pilots to commemorate inter-service teamwork, strong esprit de corps, and unprecedented sacrifices demonstrated by American fighting men during the campaign over North Vietnam. The association established Pride of Patriotism and Defense of the Constitution of the United States of America as its guiding principles.

From these principles the following objectives have been derived:

\*To provide an active forum for discussion and debate of aerial warfare issues.

\*To encourage and support aerospace activities to insure that the United States of America maintains its freedom and leadership status among nations.

\*To encourage continuation of the superb inter-service fellowship born during the Vietnam conflict.

\*To provide comfort and support for the family members of those uniformed service men KIA/MIA who were associated with the war in Southeast Asia, to include scholarship assistance to their children.

\*To provide assistance in the education of persons in the fields related to aviation and space.

\*To provide recognition for excellence in aviation and space disciplines and exploration.

\*To encourage programs supportive of developing in American youth those attributes that are basic characteristics of Association principles.

Section 3 - EMBLEM. The emblem is in the form of a shield which has a black background and yellow border. On the shield is a geographical representation of the Red River, Thud Ridge, and Hanoi, North Vietnam, the Red River depicted by a red line running from the top left to the bottom right with Thud Ridge in white above the line, a yellow star signifying Hanoi on the line, the word "River" above Thud Ridge, and the word "Rats" below the line. This emblem is registered with the U.S. Patent Office under U.S. Patent Number 1031391.

Section 4 - ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION. Articles of Incorporation were filed with

the Secretary of State of the State of Kansas, Topeka, Kansas, on August 8, 1969. The organization became a Kansas corporation as of that date.

## ARTICLE II

### MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 - ELIGIBILITY. All members of the RRVA shall be called "River Rats." Eligibility for membership in the RRVA shall be as defined in each of the following categories.

- a. Charter River Rats: Members of the United States Armed Forces who flew at least one combat mission in Route Package VI from the start of the bombing of North Vietnam on August 4, 1964 until hostilities terminated on January 27, 1973.
- b. River Rats: Individuals nominated by Charter River Rats in good standing who support the RRVA principles and objectives and who are approved by the Board of Directors.
- c. Lifetime River Rats: Any member of the Armed Forces who became a prisoner held in North Vietnam (4th Allied Wing) or who was shot down and imprisoned as a result of hostile enemy action encountered over North Vietnam during the period August 4, 1964 through January 27, 1973, is automatically eligible for membership.
- d. Honor Roll River Rats: The RRVA will list on its Honor Roll those United States aircrew members who, shot down as a result of hostile enemy action encountered over North Vietnam during the period August 4, 1964 through January 27, 1973, were killed or whose continued existence is not confirmed.
- e. Command River Rats: Senior Officers in the chain of command who were in direct command of River Rats and who actually ordered combat missions flown into Package VI are eligible for membership subject to approval of the Board of Directors.
- f. Corporate River Rats: Interested groups, organizations, and corporations who agree to support the principles and objectives of the RRVA are eligible for membership subject to approval of the Board of Directors. Corporate River Rats may not hold office, vote, or participate in policy decisions of the RRVA. However, individual corporate members may hold office, vote, or participate in policy decisions if they qualify for individual eligibility.

ACTIVE MEMBERS - All members whose dues are paid or who are lifetime members and are in good standing shall be known as active River Rats.

Section 2 - APPLICATIONS. Applications for membership in category a, b, c, d, or e of Article II, Section 1, must be made in writing and be accompanied by an

initiation fee. Any person eligible for lifetime membership (category c), upon written application, will receive automatic membership and no dues or initiation fee will be required. Applications for corporate membership (category f) must be made in writing, signed by a corporate representative, and be accompanied by the annual fee. Corporate membership may designate up to five (5) persons as Corporate River Rats representing that group, organization, or corporation. All applications shall be acted upon by the Board of Directors of the RRVA provided the criteria set out in Article II, Section 1, are met.

Section 3 - IDENTIFICATION. Each River Rat in good standing shall be given a membership card which reflects name, duration of membership, and such other provisions as determined by the Board of Directors. Each card must be signed by a person designated by the Board of Directors. Each newly admitted River Rat shall be given a Certificate of Membership and his name shall be published in the MIG SWEEP (RRVA official publication).

Section 4 - DURATION. Active membership shall be continued from year to year, on payment in advance of annual dues as determined by the Board of Directors, except for Lifetime River Rats, whose dues are waived, or those River Rats who have paid for a Life Membership. Dues become payable during the first quarter of each calendar year and become delinquent after March 31 of that year. Any members who fail to pay the required dues by April 30 of that year may be dropped from active membership at the discretion of the National Board of Directors, and cannot thereafter be readmitted except upon submission of a new application for membership. Any member may pay dues in advance for periods determined by the Board of Directors.

Section 5 - TERMINATION AND TRANSFER. Membership may not be transferred or assigned. Membership may be terminated for non-payment of dues or other good cause by the Board of Directors after public notice of pending termination in the MIG SWEEP.

Section 6 - DUES AND FEES. Annual dues and initiation fees will be determined by the Board of Directors. A statement of rates of dues and initiation fees is attached to these By-Laws (Attachment 1) and may be changed after 60 days advance notice of change has been published in the MIG SWEEP, or changed at the annual meeting, with approval of a majority of the active River Rats present at the members meeting.

### ARTICLE III

#### MEMBERS MEETINGS

Section 1 - ANNUAL MEETING. The annual meeting, reunion and symposium of the members shall last for approximately two days and being on a date at a place selected by the Board of Directors for the purpose of electing officers and transacting such other business as is necessary.

Section 2 - NOTICE OF MEETING. Notice of the Annual Reunion shall be announced in the MIG SWEEP at least sixty days prior to the meeting; however, this requirement for notice may be waived by the National Board of Directors.



Section 3 - QUORUM. The active River Rats who attend the annual reunions shall constitute a quorum capable of transacting all business properly brought before the meeting.

Section 4 - PRESIDING. The General Secretary, or in his absence another board member, shall preside over annual meetings and, with the Board of Directors, maintain the order of business.

Section 5 - ORDER OF BUSINESS. The following order of business shall be conducted with parliamentary procedures at annual meetings insofar as practical:

- a. Roll Call.
- b. Correcting and approval of minutes of previous meetings.
- c. Reports of Officers.
- d. Reports of Committees.
- e. Election of Officers.
- f. Unfinished Business.
- g. New Business.
- h. Adjournment.

Section 6 - VOTE. Each active River Rat, except Corporate River Rats, shall be entitled to one vote in person at all meetings of the members.

Section 7 - MAJORITY RULE. A majority vote of the active River Rats, except Corporate River Rats, present at the members meeting shall govern in all matters properly brought before the meeting.

#### ARTICLE IV RIGHTS OF MEMBERS

Section 1. Any powers delegated to or by the Board of Directors on any officer or other person may be modified, altered or withdrawn by the members; provided, however, that all actions of the Board of Directors or any officer or other person taken in pursuance of powers properly conferred shall be binding upon the RRVA.

#### ARTICLE V ASSOCIATION ORGANIZATION

Section 1 - NATIONAL ORGANIZATION. The RRVA shall consist of a National Organization composed of a Board of Directors and Local Force Organizations.

Section 2 - BOARD OF DIRECTORS. The Board of Directors shall have general management and control of the Association and its affairs and shall exercise all powers that may be exercised or performed by the Association under law, the Articles of Incorporation and these By Laws.

Section 3 - LOCAL FORCE ORGANIZATIONS. Local Force Organizations (LOCAL FORCES) shall establish and maintain local force structure that advises the Board of Directors on national affairs through their respective secretaries, per Article X of these By Laws.

## ARTICLE VI

### BOARD OF OFFICERS

Section 1 - ORGANIZATION. The Board of Directors shall consist of six required members and various other members, which member list, except for the required members, may be modified by majority vote of the then existing Board of Directors, to include, but not be restricted to, certain Committee Chairman or various offices which may be established by the Board. All members shall be voting unless specifically stated as being non-voting. The President, Vice President, General Secretary, Treasurer, Director of Country Store and General Counsel are required voting members. The following are non-required members: Secretary for East Coast Affairs, Secretary for West Coast Affairs, Secretary at Large, Secretary - Pacific, Secretary - Europe, Secretary - Navy/Marine affairs, Chairman - Advisory Council, Immediate Past President, Historian, Executive Secretary (Non-Voting) and Executive Secretary for Industry Liaison (Non-Voting).

Section 2- POWERS AND LIMITATIONS. National Officers will be empowered to carry out their duties as described in attachment 2 to these By Laws, but such officers, singly, are not authorized to commit the Association or any of its members to pecuniary liability nor within those limits without due consideration by a quorum of the Board of Directors and written approval by the President.

Section 3 - QUALIFICATIONS AND NOMINATIONS. Individuals placed in nomination for any office must be Active Members with dues paid, or Lifetime Members in good standing. Nominations shall be submitted by a nomination committee or by any active member attending the members' meeting.

Section 4 - ELECTION AND TERM. The following RRVA officers shall be elected at the annual meeting in which their terms of office expire. As specified herein, all officers not specifically listed shall hold office two years from date of their election or appointment. Officers shall be elected within normally accepted parliamentary procedures for the term of years as specified for each officer, until such time that their successors shall be elected, appointed or qualified. The term of each office of the Board of Directors shall be for a period of two years. The Vice President will succeed the President when the President's term of office expires, unless otherwise specified by quorum vote of the Board of Directors.

President	Every even year
Vice President	Every even year
Treasurer	Every even year
Secretary	Every odd year

Section 5 - TENURE. At the discretion of the Board of Directors, officers will cease to hold office upon absence from four consecutive meetings of the Board of Directors, expiration of term of office, or upon written relief delivered to the President or General Secretary or upon resignation.

Section 6 - VACANCIES. Vacancies on the Board of Directors shall be filled by appointment of the remaining officers. Interim officers so chosen shall hold office until the next annual election and until their successors shall be duly elected and qualified, unless sooner displaced or unless their term of office is terminated by resignation.

Section 7 - MEETINGS. There shall be periodic meetings of the Board of Directors. The schedule will be established by the President. All members of the Board of Directors, Voting and Non-Voting, are required to attend all Meetings. Due to the non-profit status of the organization and the nature of unreimbursed expenses which may be incurred by Board Members in attending the Annual Board Meeting and other scheduled Board Meetings all Board Members who attend such meetings, are authorized to deduct all reasonable costs and expenses of attending said Board Meetings under Reg. 1.170A-1(g) of the I.R.S. Code as Charitable Contributions.

Section 8 - SPECIAL MEETINGS. Special meetings of the Board of Directors may be called by the President, or by any three officers. The President or General Secretary shall send advance written notice to each officer at least seven days before any special meeting.

Section 9 - QUORUM. Five officers shall constitute a quorum capable of transacting any business that is brought before the meeting, except as provided elsewhere in the By Laws.

Section 10 - AGENDA. The following agenda shall be followed insofar as practical at all meetings of the Board of Directors:

- a. Roll Call.
- b. Reading, correction and approval of previous minutes.
- c. Reports of Officers.
- d. Reports of Committees.
- e. Unfinished Business.
- f. New Business.
- g. Next Meeting: Date, time, place.
- h. Adjournment.

Section 11 - MINUTES. Minutes of the Board of Directors meetings shall be recorded during the meetings and distributed to the members of the Board of Directors and Local Force Organizations within 30 days after the meeting.

## ARTICLE VII

### POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN ADDITION TO THOSE COVERED ELSEWHERE IN THESE BY LAWS

Section 1 - BUSINESS MANAGEMENT. The business management and affairs of RRVA shall be under direction and control of the Board of Directors, as shall be its several officers, agents and employees. The Board of Directors shall have authority to authorize contracts, deeds or other appropriate instruments of conveyance, incur liabilities, convey real estate, convey or invest funds, hire employees, and such other matters and things connected with the conduct of RRVA as they may determine, subject always, however, to the right of the members to modify, alter, or withdraw the powers of the Board of Directors as set forth in Article IV. The Board of Directors shall also have the power and authority to establish Committees, Secretaries, and Advisory Councils, and appoint chairmen and members to further the causes and management of the organization. Such Committees, Secretaries, and Advisory Councils shall serve at the discretion of the Board of Directors, which shall have the power to control and terminate any such established position. All instruments shall be executed on behalf of the Corporation by the President and acknowledged by the Secretary as the act of the Association. The Association shall appear on all instruments along with the signatures of the President and Secretary.

Section 2 - DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY. The Board of Directors may grant special or general authority to others and may likewise withdraw such authority, all upon such terms and conditions as the Board of Directors may determine.

Section 3 - REVOCATION OF POWERS. The powers vested by the Board of Directors in any committee, officer, agent or employee of the RRVA may be limited, altered or revoked by the Board of Directors, through proper action at any meeting.

Section 4 - BONDS. The Board of Directors may, as appropriate, require officers, agents and employees of RRVA to be bonded in an amount and with surety approved by the Board, the expense of which shall be paid by RRVA.

Section 5 - GENERAL COUNSEL. The Board of Directors shall designate an Attorney-In-Fact, with such powers and duties as may be determined. The Attorney-In-Fact will be designated RRVA General Counsel and shall be authorized to execute Powers of Attorney for the Corporation in accordance with policy established by the Board of Directors. He shall be a member of the Board of Directors.

Section 6 - DEPOSITORIES. The funds of RRVA shall be invested and/or deposited in such financial institutions as the Board of Directors may determine, to be withdrawn only as may be determined by the Board of Directors under general or special authority.

Section 7 - COMMITTEES. The RRVA Board of Directors may appoint and maintain certain standing committees and secretarial positions which shall serve at the Board's discretion. Any such Committee or Secretarial position so established shall be attached hereto as an attachment, until terminated or modified, and shall specify the purpose, membership and duties of such position.

## ARTICLE VIII

### SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Section 1 - ORGANIZATION. The Scholarship Program shall be administered by the National Board of Directors.

Section 2 - DUTIES. The Board of Directors shall annually select recipients of RRVA Scholarship awards and specify the amount of individual grants in accordance with the Scholarship Program operating procedures and selection criteria (Attachment 3 of these By Laws). The Vice President of the National Board of Directors shall be the Executive Director of the Scholarship Program and shall act as coordinator of the Scholarship Program.

## ARTICLE IX

### LOCAL FORCES ORGANIZATIONS (LOCAL FORCES)

Section 1 - PURPOSES. Local Force organizations shall provide local area organizational structures to facilitate close frequent contact and coordination between individual River Rats and the National Board of Directors.

Section 2 - ORGANIZATION. Individual River Rats within close geographical proximity of each other are encouraged to organize Local Forces for the purposes stated in Section 1 of this Article. A Local Force shall consist of one or more active River Rats who shall elect a President of Local "CincRat." The local CINCRAT shall organize a force structure, establish local procedures, call local meetings, and levy local dues as appropriate.

Section 3 - ACTIVITIES. Local Forces are encouraged to hold frequent meetings and initiate local area activities to enhance the spirit of comradeship, advance the tenets of Tactical Warfare through education of themselves and the general public, raise funds for the Scholarship Program and initiate any other appropriate activities for the good of RRVA.

Section 4 - COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION. Local Forces shall establish and maintain contact with the National Board of Directors through their respective Secretary representatives. Local Forces will provide the Board of Officers with the local force point of contact's name, address and telephone number, which will be published in the MIG SWEEP. The point of contact will usually be the local CINCRAT. Activities of local forces will be coordinated with the National Board of Directors as appropriate. At a minimum, a local force situation report (SIT REP) to the Board of Directors is required annually and should be provided to the appropriate Secretary at least forty-five days before the annual members meeting.

Section 5 - LOCAL BUSINESS AFFAIRS. Local Force business affairs shall be conducted in accordance with National RRVA policy and good business practices and shall maintain records of all business transactions, local activities, correspondence and membership actions. Local Forces shall administer the RRVA oath of allegiance and present membership certificates to new members in

coordination with the National Board of Directors. Local Force organizations cannot make any legal commitments on behalf of RRVA, Inc., nor may they use the name of "National" without prior approval in writing of the National Board of Directors.

#### ARTICLE X

##### LIABILITY OF MEMBERS, OFFICERS, EMPLOYEES

In any obligation created by RRVA or by any of its officers or employees on its behalf, it shall be provided that no liability shall attain in favor of the party contracted with or against any officer, director, member, agent or employee of RRVA, but that such party contracted with shall look solely to the assets of RRVA for satisfaction of such contract, and the RRVA will defend and indemnify any such individual acting within his authority on behalf of the corporation.

#### ARTICLE XI

##### AMENDMENTS

These By Laws may not be altered or amended except by majority vote of the active members present at a regular annual meeting. Further, proposed alterations or amendments will not be brought before the membership for vote unless detailed written justification for each proposal is forwarded to and receipt confirmed by the Board of Officers at least 30 days prior to a scheduled meeting.

#### ARTICLE XII

##### DISSOLUTION

Upon the dissolution of the corporation, the Board of Officers shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all the liabilities of the corporation, dispose of all of the assets of the corporation exclusively for the purpose of the corporation in such manner, or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for charitable, educational, religious or scientific purposes as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provisions of any future United States Code or Law), as the Board of Officers shall determine. Any of such assets not so dispersed or disposed of shall be disposed of by the Circuit Court of the county in which the principal office of the corporation is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organizations or organization as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS  
TO  
RRVA BY-LAWS

Attachment

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | Dues and Initiation Fees             |
| 2 | Officers' Duties                     |
| 3 | Scholarship Foundation Procedures    |
| 4 | Nominating Committee                 |
| 5 | Objectives and History Committee     |
| 6 | Annual Meeting and Reunion Committee |
| 7 | Country Store                        |

ATTACHMENT 1 TO BY LAWS OF  
RED RIVER VALLEY ASSOCIATION, INC.

September, 1983

RATES OF DUES AND FEES

1. DUES

Annual (1 year - \$12.00) First Year	\$ 24.00 *
Annual (1 year-Foreign, non-APO Box Number)	16.00
Tri-Annual (3 years)	30.00
Life (Lifetime of Member)	200.00
(May be paid in installments, all of which must be completed in one year.)	
Corporate (Per year)	250.00

\* Includes initiation fee, pin, and certificate.



## ATTACHMENT 2

### DUTIES OF OFFICERS

#### PRESIDENT

1. The President or "CINCRAT" shall preside at the annual members meetings and at all meetings of the Board of Directors.

2. The President has general charge of and control over the affairs of the corporation. He shall, as appropriate, sign all official correspondence and legal instruments relating to actions of the RRVA. He shall, as appropriate, sign all official correspondence and legal instruments relating to actions of the RRVA. He shall be the corporate contracting officer.

3. Assign a board member as liaison to the 4th Allied Wing (ex-POWs).

#### VICE PRESIDENT

1. The Vice President shall, in addition to the following duties, perform duties assigned to him by the Board of Directors or delegated by the President.

2. In the event of the death, disability or absence of the President, the Vice President shall perform and be vested with all the duties and powers of the President. In this event, the General Secretary shall double as the Vice President and be next in succession to the Office of President.

3. The Vice President shall serve as the Executive Director of the Scholarship Program.

#### GENERAL SECRETARY

1. The General Secretary shall be the ex-officio secretary at meetings of the Members and the Board of Directors and shall serve as Chairman of the Annual Members Meeting and shall answer and send "Thank You Notes", acknowledgements to all persons or corporations who give donations to the Corporation.

2. He shall give notice of meetings, keep and distribute meeting minutes as required by these By Laws, either individually or through the Executive Secretary, who shall perform this function.

3. Maintain an RRVA correspondence system as follows:

a. Establish and maintain an RRVA mailing address.

b. Receive and distribute RRVA incoming correspondence to the appropriate officers.

c. Promptly prepare or assign preparation of appropriate correspondence relative to outside inquiries and directed responses.

d. Coordinate correspondence actions with the Board of Directors.

4. Promptly present revenues received and bills payable to the Treasurer. Coordinate necessary financial transactions pertinent to membership, correspondence, records and publications with the Treasurer so that bills can be paid promptly and account entries are current.

#### TREASURER

1. The Treasurer shall keep accounts of financial transactions and all revenues of the Corporation received or disbursed, and deposit all monies and valuables in the name of and to the credit of RRVA, Inc. in such banks and depositories as the Board of Directors shall designate in accordance with Article VII, Section 6, of these By Laws. He shall serve as the primary officer in charge of RRVA financial affairs.

2. He shall prepare an annual corporate financial report for the past fiscal year and prepare an annual budget for the forthcoming fiscal year. The financial report and budget will include Scholarship activity and Country Store information and will be submitted to the Board of Directors for their approval at the required meeting immediately before the annual Members Meeting. The fiscal year of the RRVA, Inc. begins on January 1 and ends December 31 of each calendar year.

3. He shall initiate an annual independent audit of all income, disbursements, assets and liabilities of the corporation, to include a report of investment returns. The result of the annual audit will be presented to the Board of Directors and annual members meeting as a part of the annual financial report per paragraph 2.

4. He shall promptly file appropriate Federal Income Tax reports and pay taxes due.

5. He shall make prompt payment of all bills payable upon verification of validity and shall deposit all incoming funds promptly. He shall pay the post office box quarterly rent in advance, due: January 1, April 1, July 1, October 1. He shall record all transactions.

6. All checks for the payment of valid bills less than \$500.00 shall be signed by the Treasurer. Checks for payment of bills greater than \$500.00 shall be signed by the Treasurer with written authorization by the President. All bills over the sum of \$100.00 shall be reported to the President, but no authorization need be received before payment unless over the sum of \$500.00.

7. All deeds, notes, mortgages and other legal instruments shall be signed by the President and attested by the Secretary and the Treasurer.

8. He shall file an annual corporate report with the Secretary of State of the State of Kansas on or before April 15 of each year, with a copy of the corporate federal tax report.

9. He shall be compensated for his yearly services in an amount agreed upon by the Board of Directors at the Annual Corporate Meeting.

SECRETARIES  
(Selected by the Board of Directors)

1. The Secretaries will serve as the primary contacts to the organizations to which they are assigned or for their respective Regions' Local Forces. They shall also assist the President, General Secretary, and the Executive Secretary in the performance of their duties.

2. They shall establish and maintain personal contact with their respective local force organizations.

- a. Correspond frequently and visit, when possible, with local forces.
- b. Maintain a current roster of local force CINCRATS and their addresses.
- c. Assist in establishing new Local Force Organizations.
- d. Prepare MIG SWEEP articles on material of interest to the general membership, to include local force news.
- e. Encourage meetings and speaking engagements. Coordinate these activities with the Board of Directors.

GENERAL COUNSEL

1. The General Counsel shall act as the RRVA attorney-in-fact and shall provide legal guidance and advice on matters that affect the legal status of the RRVA.

2. He shall keep the Board of Directors informed of any pertinent changes in laws or regulations.

3. He shall draft and prepare legal instruments for the RRVA.

4. He may, with the approval of the Board of Directors, augment the legal staff as necessary.

5. He shall provide periodic reports on RRVA legal matters and policy to the Board of Directors as requested.

6. He shall be compensated for his expenses and services.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
(Independent Contractor, Non-Voting)

1. The Executive Secretary shall be the primary Secretary of the RRVA.

2. He shall be the primary coordinator of daily external business operations of the RRVA (not to conflict with the duties of other Board Members) and the activities of standing and temporary committees, and in that capacity, be

directly supported by the General Secretary and Treasurer, and other Board Members.

3. He shall compile a written "RRVA Operations Monthly Report" for the Board of Directors.

4. He shall be an independent contractor and operate through written contact with the RRVA organization, although he may be a member of the RRVA.

5. He shall perform membership duties as follows:

a. Promptly (within 10 days) process all applications for membership.

b. Keep a current membership master roster identifying the category of membership per Article II, military service, monthly and yearly dues paid through, address, title and name of each active member.

c. Maintain the RRVA Honor Roll per Article II.

d. Maintain an inactive membership roster to include all former members who became inactive in the last five years.

e. Provide requested membership information to the Board of Directors and Local Forces and MIG SWEEP Editor.

6. Maintain the following RRVA files and records:

a. Minutes of Meetings.

b. Membership Rosters.

c. Correspondence Files.

d. MIG SWEEP and other publications (one copy each).

e. Vital records, to include copies of Articles of Incorporation, By Laws, patents, legal documents and instruments.

7. Maintain an RRVA correspondence system as follows:

a. Establish and maintain an RRVA mailing address.

b. Receive and distribute RRVA incoming correspondence to the appropriate officers.

c. Promptly prepare or assign preparation of appropriate correspondence relative to outside inquiries and directed responses.

d. Coordinate correspondence actions with the Board of Directors.

8. Promptly present revenues received and bills payable to the Treasurer. Coordinate necessary financial transactions pertinent to membership,

correspondence, records and publications with the Treasurer so that bills can be paid promptly and account entries are current.

9. Manage, publish, and mail the MIG SWEEP (quarterly publication of the RRVA) as directed by the Board of Directors.

10. He shall be compensated and have duties as are set forth in a written contract, or as are provided by the Board of Directors.

SECRETARY FOR INDUSTRY LIAISON  
(Non-Voting)

1. He shall be the primary coordinator and contact as between the RRVA and representatives of private industry and RRVA corporate members.

2. He shall compile a written quarterly report of his activities, which shall be presented to the Board of Directors, and as appropriate all or part of that report shall be published in the MIG SWEEP.

3. He shall solicit industry and corporate membership contributions to the scholarship fund.

4. He shall also perform all activities as may be requested by the Board of Directors and assist in achieving greater participation in the RRVA.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR THE  
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Executive Director of the Scholarship Program will be the Vice President of the National Board of Directors as set forth in Attachment 2 of the By Laws. He will be responsible for the administrative function of the Scholarship Program and shall see that each scholarship is administered pursuant to the final vote of the Board of Directors. He shall, in conjunction with the President, see that all recipients are notified of scholarship assistance, and shall personally, on behalf of the RRVA, notify each recipient by written letter of their selection for scholarship assistance.

HISTORIAN

1. He shall act as the RRVA Historian and serve as chairman of the Objectives and Concepts Committee (see Attachment 5 of these By Laws).

2. He shall perform other duties as pertain to the publication of the MIG SWEEP, as directed by the Board of Directors.

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

He shall serve as Chairman of the Nominating Committee to fill positions on the Board of Directors. (See Attachment 4) and act as Chairman of the Annual Members Meeting/Symposium. (See Attachment 6).

ATTACHMENT 3

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM OPERATION PROCEDURES

Selection Procedures Criteria

Section 1 - OPERATING PROCEDURES.

A. All donations or other monies received for support of the RRVA Scholarship Fund shall be held under the title, "Red River Valley Scholarship Fund." The Fund shall be set up and registered as a non-profit education and welfare organization as defined in the regulations of the Internal Revenue Service. The selection of the administering trust or investment organization shall be approved by the Board of Directors.

B. Annually, at the Annual Board of Directors Meeting, the National Board of Directors shall determine the total dollar amount to be disbursed to support the annual scholarship program.

C. The recipients of the scholarship must be sons or daughters of MIA/KIA aircrew who were either lost in Southeast Asia or, if lost elsewhere, had flown at least one combat mission over Southeast Asia, and shall be selected on the basis of need, demonstrated academic achievement, college entrance examinations, and accomplishments in school, church and social activities. Applications will be accepted on the basis of criteria established by the National Board of Directors as contained in paragraph 2 of this Attachment. The National Board of Directors will select the recipients and determine appropriate size of grants, not to exceed the total dollar amount approved for disbursement in a given year by the Board of Directors. In addition, an appropriate number of alternates will be selected in order of priority. If in the opinion of the Board of Directors, that a special circumstance exists, subject to approval of a majority vote of those present at the annual business meeting, that a scholarship should be awarded to someone other than a son or daughter of an MIA/KIA, as set forth above, such scholarship may be awarded.

D. All recipients will be notified immediately by letter from the President. All disbursements will be made by the Trust Organization upon direction of the Executive Director of the Scholarship Program.

E. The scholarship grants shall be forwarded to the appropriate educational institution for administration. The Scholarship awards are contingent upon continued satisfactory performance by the recipient. Unless otherwise authorized by the Board of Directors, funds are to be released by the educational institution to satisfy only the following expenses: tuition, fees, books, room, board. If for any reason a recipient fails to enroll, disenrolls, or for any reason fails to utilize the scholarship funds, all unused funds shall be transferred to scholarships for the designated alternates in priority, or returned to the RRVA as determined by the National Board of Directors. In no case will scholarship funds be given directly to recipients or their families.

## Section 2 - SELECTION PROCEDURES.

Selection of scholarship awards will be made annually in July and will be based on the following criteria:

A. Selection is open to any person who qualifies pursuant to Section 1(c).

B. The applicant must have been accepted for admission to an accredited college, or already been enrolled.

C. Post-graduate students are eligible, however, non-post-graduate applicants have priority for assistance.

D. Submission of transcripts of high school grades completed, or if already enrolled in college, submission of transcript for completed college semesters or quarters.

E. Submission of copy of Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) score, or equivalent college entrance test score.

F. Statement of student's marital status.

G. Submission of photograph of student (approximately 4" X 4", black and white).

H. Submission of list of outside activities or accomplishments in school, church or community.

I. Submission of financial status, to include total gross annual income available to the applicant or his immediate family and statement of financial need and mitigating circumstances. Government sources of income and amounts should be itemized.

J. Submission of letter from student or sponsor giving short description of need for scholarship, student's intended course of study, and institution selected by the student.

K. Any application not received by the established deadline shall not be considered. All information and requests for scholarship forms shall be received no later than March 1 of each year. All completed applications shall be submitted no later than April 1 of each year.

L. Any application that is received which does not correspond to the requirements as set forth herein or is considered incomplete by the Board of Directors, on advice of the Vice President, shall subject that applicant to loss of priority and possible non-assistance.

M. Provide copy of Government form DD-1300 (form provided all families of MIA/KIA/POW). Copy of form can be obtained from Casualty Office of each individual service.

ATTACHMENT 4

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Section 1 - PURPOSE. The Nominating Committee shall determine and place in nomination the names of one of more qualified active River Rats for the National Board of Directors.

Section 2 - MEMBERSHIP. The Nominating Committee shall be appointed by the National Board of Directors. The Chairman of the Committee shall be the Immediate Past President.

Section 3 - DUTIES. In addition to the individual duties described elsewhere in these By Laws, the Nominating Committee shall:

A. Draft a list of nominees for the new Board of Directors, coordinate the list with the Board of Directors so that the list can be published in the MIG SWEEP at least sixty days before the Annual Members Meeting and Reunion.

B. Ascertain that all members are qualified active River Rats according to Article II of these By Laws and volunteer to serve in the office nominated for.



## ATTACHMENT 5

### OBJECTIVES, CONCEPTS AND HISTORY COMMITTEE

Section 1 - PURPOSE. There shall be an Objectives, Concepts and History Committee to plan for the accomplishment of Association objectives and record the accomplishments of the RRVA as directed by the Board of Directors.

Section 2 - MEMBERSHIP. The Objectives, Concepts and History Committee shall consist of three members. The Historian shall serve as chairman of the committee and may appoint the other members with the approval of the Board of Directors.

Section 3 - DUTIES. The Committee shall:

- A. Review annually the Association objectives and statement of purpose.
- B. Maintain a written history describing all significant activities of the RRVA.
- C. Present to the Board of Officers an annual report on By Laws, objectives and history at the beginning of each calendar year. Include recommendations for changes with supporting rationale.
- D. Develop concepts and plans for accomplishment of association objectives.

ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING/SYMPOSIUM AND REUNION COMMITTEE

Section 1 - PURPOSE. An Annual Members Meeting and Symposium/Reunion Committee shall be responsible for planning and arranging the Annual Members Meeting at each Reunion and the organization of each annual reunion.

Section 2 - MEMBERSHIP. The Annual Members Meeting/Symposium Committee will consist of one member: Immediate Past President, who will be the Chairman. The Reunion Committee will consist of a Chairman, who shall be appointed by the Board of Directors for a 3 year term. His Committee shall be a minimum of three individuals, who shall all be approved by the Board of Directors.

Section 3 - DUTIES. (a) The Chairman of the Annual Members Meeting/Symposium shall work closely with the Secretary for Industry Liaison in organizing industry participation at each annual reunion. He shall organize the speakers and activities and symposium program. He shall coordinate all activities with the Chairman of the Reunion Committee. (b) The Reunion Committee shall research and recommend the location, date and other important facts of the reunion, to take place the year after the next upcoming reunion, to the Board of Directors for their approval. This recommendation shall occur at the reunion two years prior to the recommended date of the meeting and after approval shall:

a. Establish close contact with the Host Local Force and identify the host CINCRAT (CINC Reunion). The Host CINC shall be the local Reunion Chairman unless he declines or the Chairman and the Board of Directors appoint a local Reunion Committee Chairman.

b. Develop and update a meeting operations plan in coordination with the Host Local Force.

c. Initiate action at least one year before the Reunion to obtain a guest speaker and draft a list of possible guest speakers and distinguished guests for the Board of Directors' approval at the annual reunion one year prior to the next reunion.

d. Establish through the Local Reunion Chairman:

1. a local committee, to handle Reunion registration, protocol, reunion programs, publicity, reunion activities (golf, tennis, fashion shows, etc.).

2. a reunion secretary/treasurer to handle the budget, bank accounts, bank deposits and financial reports who shall submit a final written report and all Reunion funds to the National Board Treasurer within 90 days after the Reunion.

e. Establish close contact and coordinate activity plans with a "professional" travel/hotel councilor, in order to obtain the best possible hotel, food, beverage, and transportation package for the annual reunion.

f. Establish close contact with and coordinate plans regarding symposium with Symposium Chairman.

g. Initiate action through the local committee to advertise the particulars of the Reunion in the various media and to Local Forces.

h. In conjunction with the Treasurer, provide sufficient capital funds to the Host Local Force (CINC Reunion) to initiate Reunion commitments and activities. Funds to finance the meeting shall be collected from each attendee and maintained by the Treasurer separately from regular RRVA, Inc. funds.

i. Compile and submit to the President an accounting of all revenues and disbursements, to include appropriate documentation.

j. Draft procedures to comply with appropriate DOD Directives (i.e., 5500.7, as revised).

k. Report quarterly or as requested by the Board of Directors to the Board of Directors on the progress of Annual Reunion.

l. Compile and maintain a Reunion instruction booklet for future use.

ATTACHMENT 7

COUNTRY STORE

Section 1 - PURPOSE. There shall be a Director of the Country Store, who shall be a voting member of the National Board of Directors, and he shall provide a stock of approved RRVA accouterments and merchandise for distribution or sale to River Rats and the public.

Section 2 - ELECTION. The Director of the Country Store shall be appointed by the Board of Directors at the annual members meeting.

Section 3 - DUTIES. The Director of the Country Store shall:

A. Purchase, maintain title to, and provide a warehouse of an adequate inventory of RRVA, Inc. approved merchandise.

B. Provide mail order service and personal sales for the RRVA membership and the public.

C. Provide stationery, trophies, plaques and other supplies for the official use of the National Board of Directors, as requested.

D. Be self-supporting. Funds shall be accounted for in a manner appropriate for IRS audit and held separately from the regular funds of the RRVA.

E. Provide an annual written report (income, expenses, and inventory) on activities and financial status to the Board of Directors by March 31 of each calendar year. The report shall cover the RRVA fiscal year: January 1 through December 31.

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## APPENDIX

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### C

#### CINCRATs

1969-70	Colonel Howard C. "Scrappy" Johnson, USAF, Ret
1970-71	Brigadier General Robin Olds, USAF, Ret
1971-72	Captain Bruce Miller, USN, Ret
1972-73	Colonel Wesley D. "Red" Kimball, USAF, Ret
1973-74	Captain Paul G. Merchant, USN, Ret
1974-75	Colonel C. C. Vasiliadis, USAF, Ret
1975-76	Commander Joe Tully, USN, Ret
1976-77	Colonel George W. Acree II, USAF
1977-78	Captain Jack Fellowes, USN, Ret
1978-80	Major Frank "Frosty" Sheridan, USAF, Ret
1980-82	Colonel Robert F. Gadd III, USAF, Ret
1982-84	Lieutenant Colonel John Piowaty, USAF, Ret
1984-86	Colonel Lawrence "Larry" Pickett, USAF, Ret

It appears as though almost every type of aircraft in the theatre of operations has gone north at one time or another. You will find a brief note at the bottom of the list that will discuss which went where, as not all aircraft went to Pack Six or the vicinity thereof, "*not that the heat was any lower but . . . .*"

#### UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

1.	F-105	THUNDERCHIEF	Republic Aviation
2.	F-100	SUPER SABRE	North American
3.	F-4	PHANTOM II	McDonnell-Douglas
4.	F-104	STARFIGHTER	Lockheed
5.	B-57	CANBERRA	Martin
6.	B-52	STRATOFORTRESS	Boeing
7.	B-66	DESTROYER	Douglas
• • • #	8.	C-130	HERCULES
•	9.	H-3	"JOLLY GREEN"
•	10.	H-53	SUPER "JOLLY GREEN"
	11.	F-111	"AARDVARK"
•	12.	A-1	SKYRAIDER
• •	13.	F-101	VOODOO
#	14.	U-2	Lockheed
#	15.	SR-71	"BLACKBIRD"
	16.	AC-119	"STINGER"
• •	17.	C-121	CONSTELLATION
#	18.	C-123	PROVIDER
•	19.	HU-16	ALBATROSS
#	20.	AC-47	"PUFF"
	21.	A-7	CORSAIR II
#	22.	A-26	INVADER
• • •	23.	O-1	"BIRD DOG"
• • •	24.	O-2	SKYMASTER
	25.	F-5	Northrop
	26.	A-37	DRAGONFLY
• •	27.	C-135	STRATOTANKER
•	28.	H-43	"HUSKY"

#### UNITED STATES NAVY

1.	F-4	PHANTOM II	McDonnell
2	F-8	CRUSADER	LTV
3	A-6	INTRUDER	Grumman
• •	4.	E-2	HAWKEYE
5.	A-3	SKYWARRIOR	Douglas
#	6.	RA-5C	VIGILANTE
7	A-4	SKYHAWK	Douglas
8.	A-1	SKYRAIDER	Douglas
•	9.	H-53	SUPER "JOLLY GREEN"
#	10.	OP-2E	NEPTUNE
#	11.	SP-5B	MARLIN
#	12.	P-3	ORION
•	13.	HU-16	ALBATROSS
	14.	A-7	CORSAIR II
•	15.	UH-2	SEASPRITE
• •	16.	UH-3	Sikorsky

#### UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

1.	F-4	PHANTOM II	McDonnell
2.	F-8	CRUSADER	LTV
3.	A-6	INTRUDER	Grumman
4.	A-4	SKYHAWK	Douglas
• •	5.	EF-10D	SKYKNIGHT
• •	6.	C-130	HERCULES
• • •	7.	OV-10	BRONCO

#### UNITED STATES ARMY

•	1.	UH-1	"HUEY"	Bell Aviation
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#### CODE:

- Denotes SAR (SEARCH AND RESCUE) but may have been dual.
- • Denotes AIRBORNE COMMAND AND CONTROL
- • • Denotes primarily as FAC aircraft, but may have been used in dual role.
- # Primarily an interdiction role, i.e., HO CHI MINH TRAIL, or COASTAL PATROL
- # # Primarily "RECCE" aircraft.

Hopefully, we did not leave anybody out, but the list is really long! Many of the aircraft listed had dual and triple role, but this could get to be a mess, so hopefully this will recognize most everyone.

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C. L. Valentine

30 June '83 (12:11)

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## APPENDIX

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### E

#### REUNION LOCATIONS

- Thailand

May, 1967	Korat RTAFB
August, 1967	Ubon RTAFB
November, 1967	Takhli RTAFB
March, 1968	Udorn RTAFB
June, 1968	Korat RTAFB

- US

- Practice Reunions

April, 1969	Wichita, Kansas
May, 1970	San Antonio, Texas
May, 1971	San Diego, California
April, 1972	Wichita, Kansas

- Real Reunions

August, 1973	Las Vegas, Nevada
May, 1974	Chicago, Illinois
April, 1975	Las Vegas, Nevada
April, 1976	Las Vegas, Nevada
April, 1977	Norfolk, Virginia
April, 1978	Las Vegas, Nevada
March, 1979	San Antonio, Texas
April, 1980	Las Vegas, Nevada
May, 1981	Austin, Texas
April, 1982	Las Vegas, Nevada
April, 1983	Las Vegas, Nevada (See Note)
April, 1984	Fort Worth, Texas
April, 1985	Las Vegas, Nevada

NOTE: After 1975-76, Las Vegas was the reunion site every other year. The repeat in 1983 was to hold the 10th Real Reunion in Las Vegas.